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NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

Prospective contributors should refer to the detailed Notice to Contributors that appears in the Spring 1988 issue of POQ.

BELIEVABILITY AND THE PRESS

MICHAEL J. ROBINSON AND
ANDREW KOHUT

Abstract This study looks at believability ratings assigned to 39 news organizations and news personalities by a nationally representative sample of 2,104 adult men and women. The data provide three major findings about the believability of the American press, all of which, at least in part, tend to be at odds with much of the conventional wisdom and some of the contemporary research dealing with the credibility of the news media. First, the overwhelming majority of the general public believes most of what it hears, sees, or reads in the nation's press. Second, perceived "believability" of the news media is *not* closely related to those political and demographic variables that typically divide public opinion in America. Third, the public does "group" the news media in terms of "believability," but the groupings do not equate with the dichotomy usually drawn between television and print journalism.

Is there a credibility crisis for the press? Part of the problem in answering that question has to do with the definition of "credibility"; part has to do with the definition of "the press."

In 1985 the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) published the results of their year-long study of public attitudes toward the news media (McGrath, 1985a). Their conclusion—that three-fourths of the public has some serious reservations about the credibility of the press—made clear that there is a real image problem for the media. But the ASNE definition of credibility was very broadly gauged. It included dimensions of press image that ranged from the rudeness and insensitivity of news reporters to the accuracy of their copy. And the questions that ASNE asked were often about news forms in general—as is true with most credibility research (Whitney, 1985).

But what does the public say if the issue is more narrowly drawn? What if credibility is defined specifically as *believability?* And what if the public is given only *specific* news organizations to evaluate? Would

MICHAEL J. ROBINSON is Associate Professor of Government at Georgetown University. ANDREW KOHUT is President of the Gallup Organization.

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specificity like this cause us to reconsider previous findings or conclusions about the credibility of the news media? Apparently yes. When the question about credibility is posed in this fashion the answers are, in fact, somewhat different from those that have come before (Harris, 1981; Alter, 1984; McGrath, 1985b). Results from this set of national surveys present a somewhat surprising picture of attitudes toward the press, although there already does exist a revisionist interpretation of the credibility problem (Harris, 1984; Shaw, 1985; Meyer, 1985; Schneider and Lewis, 1985).

When asked directly about the *believability* of news organizations and newspeople—specific news organizations and people—Americans express generally positive opinions about the press. Nor is there very much variation in opinion about press believability among the various political and sociological groups that typically divide public opinion in America. To suppose that believability of the press varies substantially from one demographic or ideological group to the next is, to a surprising degree, an incorrect inference.

Perhaps equally surprising is the fact that the public does not draw any clear distinction between print and television news, at least not in terms of believability. While many, if not most, credibility research studies adopt an a priori classification that pits broadcast journalism against print reporting, the public does not categorize the news media quite that way.

Method

In spring 1985 the Times Mirror Company commissioned the Gallup Organization to conduct a multistage set of surveys at the national level. A pilot survey was conducted in April, two other phone surveys were conducted in August and November 1985, and follow-up surveys were conducted in July and December 1986. But the main survey, and the one from which most of the findings in this article are drawn, was conducted during June and July 1985.

During the June and July survey, Gallup interviewed 2,104 adults in their homes, asking respondents more than 150 separate questions in interviews lasting, on average, an hour and ten minutes. The sample was drawn using the standard national sampling techniques employed by Gallup in its preelection polling.[1] The sampling error for this size sample is plus or minus three percentage points.

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[1] The design is that of a replicated probability sample, down to the block level in the case of urban areas and to segments of townships in the case of rural areas. There were approximately 180 sampling locations. The sample design included stratification by four

The data used in this article are derived mainly from one believability item, repeated 39 times in the June–July survey, with only the name of the news organization or the news person changed in each successive reiteration of the original question. The question reads as follows:

> Please rate how much you think you can believe each organization (the following people) I name on a scale of 4 to 1. On this 4-point scale, "4" means you can believe *all or most* of what they say and "1" means you can believe *almost nothing* of what they say.

Findings

BELIEVABILITY: MEASURES FOR THE PUBLIC AT LARGE

Absolute scores. Among those respondents who expressed an "on-scale" opinion, there was (and remains) little question that hard news organizations and newspeople are "believable"; a few news sources were considered "highly believable." In absolute terms, any mean higher than 2.0 indicates a greater number of believers than doubters. Only the *National Enquirer* and *Rolling Stone* failed this admittedly "easy" test.

The ordering of people and organizations in Table 1 presents few surprises. Walter Cronkite was, as anchor, America's most trusted person; in a national survey conducted four years after his retirement, he still maintained his status as most believable. The ordering for other news personalities was what one might expect, with anchormen receiving the highest scores and correspondents and commentators doing slightly less well.

Softer news organizations—*Parade, People, USA Today*—consistently rated lower than hard news organizations. The only clear exception to the rule was *Reader's Digest*, a soft news magazine that did as well as most hard news sources.

What is perhaps most surprising in Table 1 is that virtually all serious news sources did well in terms of believability. Consider, for example, CBS News. During 1985, a year in which CBS News was, more than any other news organization, the focus of controversy concerning credibility, only 1% of the national public gave CBS the lowest possible scores for believability. Despite the Westmoreland suit against CBS

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size-of-community strata, each of which was further stratified into seven geographic regions.

Allowance for persons not at home was made by a "time-at-home" weighting procedure. Also, minor adjustments of the sample were made for educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau, and by age.

Table 1. Mean Believability Scores for News Organizations and Newspeople

	Score	*N*	Percent DK, No Opinion
Walter Cronkite	3.49	2002	6
Dan Rather	3.31	1930	9
Peter Jennings	3.29	1742	18
Ted Koppel	3.29	1549	28
Wall Street Journal	3.28	1203	44
David Brinkley	3.27	1876	13
John Chancellor	3.27	1718	21
Tom Brokaw	3.25	1676	22
MacNeil-Lehrer	3.22	916	58
CBS News	3.20	2022	4
Local TV news	3.20	2000	5
CNN	3.20	1090	48
ABC News	3.20	2007	4
Time	3.18	1638	23
NBC News	3.18	2015	4
Mike Wallace	3.17	1838	14
Reader's Digest	3.16	1786	16
Newsweek	3.15	1569	26
Radio news	3.13	1854	11
Daily newspapers	3.11	2002	5
Paul Harvey	3.08	1566	28
Associated Press	3.06	1583	26
Diane Sawyer	3.06	1293	40
Sam Donaldson	3.06	1201	44
Barbara Walters	3.03	1967	7
Bill Moyers	3.01	1165	46
Geraldo Rivera	2.99	1236	41
National newspapers	2.99	1384	35
"All Things Considered"	2.98	885	58
George Will	2.95	638	70
USA Today	2.93	1123	46
RONALD REAGAN	2.84	2077	2
Phil Donahue	2.71	1893	11
Jack Anderson	2.71	1109	51
Parade	2.54	1046	50
Ann Landers	2.51	1860	12
People	2.38	1433	31
Rolling Stone	1.99	830	58
National Enquirer	1.49	1604	24

and the public attempt by Fairness in Media to take over the network for alleged liberal bias, the ratio of highest scores to lowest scores for CBS was about 25 to 1. And in this respect CBS was much like all other major news sources.

Note, too, that CBS proved to be typical in another way: most Americans with an opinion gave CBS a "3" for believability, not a "4." Only Cronkite, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour receive a modal score of "4"; all other major news sources or newspeople receive a plurality or a majority score of "3."

Another interesting finding pertaining to CBS, NBC, and ABC is that the anchormen do better than their respective networks in terms of believability. While Table 1 provides only mixed evidence for the thesis that broadcast sources are more believable than print sources, it does suggest that anchormen are somewhat more believable than the news organizations employing them.

This finding does not, in fact, prove to be merely artifactual—the consequence of large variations in the number of "off-scale" responses. Anchors and networks all elicit very high levels of "scalable" response.[2]

The Reagan comparison: Then and now. In comparative terms the news media also did well. When using favorability scores instead of believability scores, we found that the major news organizations were more positively regarded than any other political groups or institutions on our list, a list that included Congress, the CIA, business corporations, the military, the freeze movement, the women's movement, and labor unions (Gallup, 1986).

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[2] The mean scores that appear in Table 1 do *not* include information on nonresponses, but the last column does include the percentage of "off-scale" responses for each individual news source.

Respondents in this survey could (and did) tell us that they could not rate, or had not heard of, particular news sources. There is wide variability in the level of "off-scale" responses toward these 39 sources. In fact, these figures reveal surprisingly high levels of nonopinion toward several news sources one might consider fairly visible.

We have chosen to present our believability findings on the basis of "on-scale" responses only, for three reasons. The first is that there are very few "off-scale" responses for those sources that represent the heart of the news system for the national audience.

The second justification for setting aside nonresponses is an empirical relationship discovered in these data that makes other common approaches to "off-scale" responses seem less appropriate. Those who fall in the highest quartile in terms of "press knowledge" are at least twice as likely as those in the lowest quartile to express an opinion on our believability items.

There is also a modest *negative* correlation between "press knowledge" and "press believability"; those who know more are slightly less likely to give higher scores for believability. It is possible that those who did not respond are actually more likely to express higher scores than the rest of the population. So our technique of ignoring "off-scale" responses has understated, if modestly, the actual believability of the press.

Finally, excluding "off-scale" responses makes substantive sense—it is more consistent with the theoretical issue at hand. The case here involves believability, not visibility.

As for believability, we included only one direct comparison between the press and "something" else. We compared press believability with the believability score the public granted, at the time, to President Reagan.

At the time of the original survey Reagan's believability was quite high for a practicing political leader. Indeed, at the time (summer 1985) only 12% of the population gave Reagan a "1" (lowest score) for believability. Yet even during his most successful year in terms of public approval, Reagan's believability mean was "only" 2.84, significantly lower than the mean score achieved for 31 news organizations and journalists.

Even before the Iran-Contra affair erupted, Reagan's believability score was lower than that for all but three news media personalities; only Phil Donahue, Jack Anderson, and Ann Landers received lower scores than the president in 1985. He fell far behind all the network anchors (by about half a point on a four-point scale) and also ran behind all the network news correspondents—reporters as controversial as Sam Donaldson, Barbara Walters, and Mike Wallace. In this survey conducted in mid-1985, even Geraldo Rivera—perhaps the most controversial network news reporter on the original list—earned a higher believability score than Reagan.

Comparing believability of newspeople and political leaders may not be fair to politicians under any circumstances. Surveys have consistently shown the news media to be regarded as more honest than political leaders (ABC Viewpoint Poll, 1984; Los Angeles Times Poll, 1981). But at the time the Reagan comparison had—and still has—real utility for those interested in assessing the believability of the press, primarily because President Reagan was, at the time of these interviews, regarded as something of a benchmark in terms of public trust and approbation.

What the 1985 survey indicates is that President Reagan, even at his peak, never approached the press in terms of believability. In fact, our data from 1985 also show that the public regarded the press more *favorably* than it did Reagan: Reagan's mean favorability score in mid-1985 was 2.88; for network news the figure was 3.14 (Gallup, 1986).

In December 1986 Gallup returned to the field and asked 1,502 respondents, by phone, some of the same believability questions it had originally asked about Reagan and several visible news sources in 1985. The December 1986 follow-up survey shows that the Iran-Contra affair had substantial impact on both the believability of the president and the press. The president's mean believability score fell from 2.84 (1985) to 2.48 during the last month of 1986. As Table 2 shows, the press's believability scores fell, in *absolute* terms, as much as the president's.

Table 2. Believability Scores for Reagan and Five News Sources: Comparisons Between Summer 1985 and the Month Following Revelations About the Iran-Contra Affair

	Summer 1985	*N*	December 1986	*N*
Peter Jennings	3.29	1742	2.97	1351
Dan Rather	3.31	1930	2.94	1422
Tom Brokaw	3.25	1676	2.94	1374
Daily newspaper most familiar with	3.11	2002	2.78	1457
Network news[a]	3.19	2015[b]	2.84	1477
RONALD REAGAN	2.84	2077	2.48	1477

[a] Mean believability score for the three networks combined (ABC, CBS, and NBC).
[b] Average number of interviews for the three networks.

In light of earlier research, the fact that the press *and* the president fell together, and in nearly equal proportion, during the first several months of the Iran-Contra affair is somewhat surprising. In one of the most comprehensive investigations ever conducted on the topic of public faith in political institutions, Lipset and Schneider (1983) found that when confidence in the presidency was diminished, confidence in the press was usually enhanced. Why the inconsistency? It may well be that our before and after measures corroborate earlier experimental research which indicates that *unresolved* factual disputes between the press and the government diminish the credibility of both the media and the administration (Robinson, 1977).

Whatever else these findings indicate, they certainly suggest that the believability of the press has been, and remains, significantly and substantially greater than the believability of President Reagan.

CORRELATES OF BELIEVABILITY

Demographic variables. Although some surveys (McGrath, 1985a; Immerwahr and Doble, 1982) do emphasize demographic patterns in attitudes toward the press, our research tends to corroborate those earlier studies that emphasized the relatively weak relationships between standard demographic variables and attitudes toward the news media.

Whitney (1985), in an extensive review of the literature, concludes that attitudes toward the press are only weakly correlated with those demographic variables one might expect to be linked with credibility, image, etc. Lipset and Schneider (1983) also discovered that social and political groups do not vary much in their feelings toward the press.

Table 3. Correlation Scores for Each of the Three Major Networks and Several Social and Political Variables

	ABC	CBS	NBC
Age	−.11**	−.11**	−.09**
Sex	.15**	.16**	.14**
Educational status	−.12**	−.10**	−.11**
Occupational status	.03	.01	.00
Party (Republicanism)	−.08**	−.13**	−.10*
Ideology (political conservatism)	.01	−.06**	.01
Reagan approval	−.09**	−.11**	−.08*
Social alienation	−.04**	.06*	−.03
Military service	−.08**	−.10*	−.10*
News consumption	−.02	−.03	−.04
Knowledge about press	−.16**	−.20**	−.21**

NOTE: Correlations used are gammas.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Our findings in Table 3 focus on the relationship between demographic variables and the believability of *network news.*[3] This focus actually overstates the relationship between believability and demography—network news is more likely than most forms of press to elicit a demographic pattern of response. Yet Table 3 indicates that while there is some statistically significant relationship between attitudes toward believability of the networks and one's demographic characteristics, these relationships are modest. Occupational status, for example, has no relationship whatever with believability.

[3] The occupational status index and other indices in Table 3 that are not self-evident are briefly outlined below:

The *occupational status* index is based on a question asking respondents to choose one of the 15 categories which best describes the kind of work they do. For example: professional worker, skilled tradesman, sales worker, service worker.

The *ideology* index is based on asking respondents to place themselves on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 represents conservative and 6 represents liberal.

The *social alienation* index is constructed from six Lickert scale items. Examples: "Most people really do care what happens to the next fellow," "Money is the most important factor influencing public policies," "People like me don't have any say about what the government does."

The *news consumption* index is composed of a number of questions measuring frequency of reading newspapers, watching television news programs, and listening to the radio. The index also includes, among other items, the amount of attention given to various items in a daily newspaper and in a television newscast.

The *knowledge* index comprises 11 closed-ended items testing knowledge of such concepts as press release, ownership of major news organizations, the division of labor within a newspaper, etc.

For further information on these indices, please contact the authors.

Military background is statistically associated with believability. As one might expect, respondents from families with some personal tie to the armed services have slightly less positive attitudes toward the believability of the networks. Even alienation proves to be a weak predictor, as in past research (Becker, Cobbey, and Sobowale, 1978).

Among the more powerful demographic correlates are age and gender. Believability is for all three networks statistically associated with youthfulness. The youngest adults (18–24) awarded the highest scores for believability. The strongest demographic relationship, however, is with gender. While a cluster analysis for these same survey data indicates that age is, at best, a weak element in groupings of attitudes toward the news media, sex of the respondent remains an important factor in attitudes toward the press—in general, and in reference specifically to believability. This statistic translates into a five-percentage-point difference between men and women in terms of network believability, with women consistently somewhat more willing to believe the news media.

Political variables. Political variables also produce mixed findings. Party identification proves to be a modest, but statistically significant, predictor of network believability: the average gamma for the three networks combined is .1. Precisely the same results emerge when one correlates attitudes toward Reagan with believability of the press—those who approve of Reagan are slightly less likely to believe the press (average gamma = .1).

What is interesting, however, is that "political conservatism" on sociopolitical issues does not correlate with believability. Only with CBS is one able to find any correlation between political philosophy and believability—and it is very modest indeed.

This pattern with CBS exists throughout: political variables are consistently more likely to predict believability scores for CBS than for any of the other commercial networks. It would appear, then, that the long-running conflict between CBS and the conservative movement in America has had a slightly polarizing effect in terms of public opinion.

Nonetheless, the overall conclusion for Table 3 appears to be that political variables are not particularly strong correlates of believability. Although other forms of press-related opinion, especially questions involving *freedom of the press,* are substantially related to political viewpoint, believability is not. At best our findings as to ideology corroborate those of earlier research (Lipset and Schneider, 1983; Gunther and Lasora, 1985). The most *extreme* respondents—on the right and on the left—are less likely to believe the press. But there is very little right/left division to believability.

Information variables. While patterns of news consumption are unrelated to believability of the news media, informational variables are related. As Table 3 indicates, level of education correlates significantly, and negatively, with believability (mean gamma = −.11).

However, the largest relationship in Table 3 involves a special sort of information—information specifically about the press. This relationship has appeared in other research (Whitney, 1984), and is sustained when controls are applied. Our clustering analysis also indicates that knowledge about the press is disproportionately held by those who think least positively about the press (Kohut and Robinson, 1986).

Do all these statistical relationships mean what they imply—that *learning* more about the press actually contributes to a decrease in believability? We cannot answer the question for certain, although there are several qualifications to consider before addressing the issue of causation.

First, the relationship does not apply to all the media. The Associated Press, the *Wall Street Journal,* "All Things Considered," and the MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour are not considered less believable by those who know most about the press. In fact, for MacNeil-Lehrer the correlation goes in the opposite direction.

Second, the negative relationship, while significant, is weak when translated into difference in raw scores. The mean believability score for the networks among the entire sample is 3.19 (out of 4.0); for the highest quartile in terms of press knowledge the mean is 3.06. Compared to the drop in believability suffered by the press during the early months of the Iran-Contra affair, that difference is modest.

Third, the relationship between knowledge and believability applies not just to the news media but to a host of political actors and institutions. For example, those who are most knowledgeable about the press are also slightly less likely to believe President Reagan. And earlier research also indicates that education and information are negatively correlated with trust in religion, television, labor, the military, and even educational institutions (Lipset and Schneider, 1983). There may well be an inherent tendency for those who are more sophisticated and informed to be less trusting of all politically related institutions, especially mass or commercially based institutions. Still, even if typical, this relationship between sophistication and institutional confidence appears not to be wholly artifactual.

Whatever the normal patterns of public confidence, to the degree that there is a believability crisis (or problem) for the news media, there can be little question that problems exist principally in the negative relationship between press knowledge and press believability.

BELIEVABILITY: TYPES OF NEWS SOURCES

During the past 25 years, an assumption underpinning much of the survey research about the press has been that the public divides the news world into two major "hemispheres"—print and television. We tested this assumption statistically in two ways. First we examined the zero-order correlations among the various believability scores for all news sources. Second, we analyzed those same data using principal components factor analysis (orthogonal rotation). What the correlational analysis implied, the factor analysis confirmed.

The factor analysis indicated that there are no less than four strains of believability that overarch evaluations of specific news organizations. And surprising as it may seem, none of these dimensions of believability suggests a clear differentiation between print sources and broadcast sources. While one dimension does seem to involve broadcast *personalities*, news organizations are not, in the public mind, easily grouped along a print/broadcasting dimension, at least not in terms of their believability.

"Routine" news sources. To begin, there is a dimension here that includes what we consider to be the "routine" media. Routine, in essence, means the typical daily sources that Americans rely on for the bulk of their everyday news: the major networks, local broadcast, *and* the respondent's own local newspaper (Table 4).

Networks are very much a major element in what we label routine news sources. What one thinks of one network is, pretty much, what one thinks of another.[4] It is hardly surprising to find the public lumping the major commercial networks together; nor is it particularly surprising that network news and local broadcasts load heavily on this factor.

What is surprising is that this first factor is not a *broadcasting* factor per se. Loading about as heavily as local broadcast news on this dimension are attitudes toward one's own newspaper (defined here as the newspaper one is most familiar with). That local print loads so heavily on this factor suggests that respondents do not divide the world of believability into two hemispheres, one print and one broadcast. Instead, they define one element of that world as daily and unexceptional—in other words, as *routine* sources.

The sources loading high on this factor (the networks, the local broadcasts, and the local dailies) are *not* considered less believable than the more exotic news sources. Indeed, they are among the most believable, especially among the young, minorities, and those not particularly knowledgeable about the press. But these routine sources are regarded, apparently, as a group that represents the "daily news" in contemporary America.

"Special" news sources. A second believability strain might be

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[4] The zero-order correlations among the three networks approach .8. Not even *Time* and *Newsweek* can elicit nearly the degree of shared opinion ($r = .59$) that the networks produce. The networks are not a "class" of news per se, but clearly they are a major element in this category we have labeled "routine" sources.

Table 4. Factors of Believability

	Routine News Sources	Special News Sources	Soft News Sources	Person-alities
Daily newspapers	.447	.148	.220	.100
National newspapers	.217	.531	−.075	.181
Wall Street Journal	.009	.665	−.092	.119
USA Today	.105	.513	.253	.105
Associated Press	.258	.548	.061	.208
Time	.213	.540	.258	.146
Parade	.060	.241	.480	.054
People	.178	.051	.647	.029
Reader's Digest	.126	.180	.455	.112
Rolling Stone	−.002	−.058	.228	.062
Newsweek	.168	.563	.221	.199
National Enquirer	.101	−.140	.367	−.076
NBC News	.757	.269	.067	.260
ABC News	.787	.246	.070	.253
CBS News	.749	.206	.060	.320
MacNeil-Lehrer	−.018	.413	−.211	.258
CNN	.161	.378	.011	.213
Local TV news	.568	.041	.275	.201
Radio news	.456	.133	.248	.225
"All Things Considered"	.130	.186	.015	.214
Ronald Reagan	.033	.047	.232	.041
Jack Anderson	.016	.036	.149	.305
David Brinkley	.214	.175	.086	.599
Tom Brokaw	.201	.187	.052	.674
John Chancellor	.136	.285	.025	.656
Walter Cronkite	.184	.124	.083	.595
Phil Donahue	.211	.086	.231	.328
Sam Donaldson	.153	.108	.060	.572
Paul Harvey	−.031	.014	.348	.278
Peter Jennings	.254	.192	.113	.628
Ted Koppel	.167	.219	.033	.603
Ann Landers	.134	−.011	.391	.214
Bill Moyers	−.037	.237	−.037	.467
Dan Rather	.275	.078	.111	.648
Geraldo Rivera	.159	.033	.296	.410
Diane Sawyer	.126	.142	.094	.602
Mike Wallace	.229	.093	.148	.586
Barbara Walters	.264	.063	.290	.410
George Will	−.021	.132	.089	.260
Variance explained	9%	8%	6%	14%
Total variance explained		36%		

labeled "special" media: the newsweeklies, the *Wall Street Journal*, AP, and "nationally influential newspapers."

For the most part, special sources can be thought of as "serious." Indeed, all the prestige print sources included in this survey—the *Journal*, the eastern press establishment, the newsweeklies—load heavily on this factor. But the public also includes in this dimension sources that the media themselves regard as not so serious. Neither *USA Today* nor CNN are considered serious by most members of the press. Yet both sources load on this factor. That the public groups *USA Today* and CNN with other prestige news sources is something of a puzzle. But the public's behavior—at least in terms of believability—underscores what we've already said: the public divides the news media into categories in ways foreign to press critics, and print and broadcast sources are often grouped *together* in the public mind, not separately. MacNeil-Lehrer and *USA Today* both load heavily on this dimension that some might reasonably label serious news.

One might ask whether this really is "serious news," given these anomalies, but the audience for these sources does suggest that the factor has a "serious" element associated with it. The people who score high on this dimension possess virtually all the characteristics of a serious news audience. Disproportionately likely to be men, Caucasian, college-educated, urban, and interested in public affairs, these people mirror the demographic profile so long associated with the serious news audience.

Still, given the inclusion of news sources not easily characterized as serious, it may well be that our second category has as its common denominator something other than weightiness, and that common denominator is exceptionalism. If nothing else, all these sources are outside the workaday news channels for most Americans.

"Soft" news sources. There is a third dimension of source believability; those sources that load heavily on this dimension are the news media's "third world." In the vernacular of the press, these are the "soft news" media. Not surprisingly, *Parade, Reader's Digest,* Ann Landers, and Paul Harvey help define this category by loading heavily on this third factor. To disbelieve one of these sources is, for the most part, to disbelieve the other three.

Unfortunately, our questionnaire did not ask about *programs* such as "Entertainment Tonight" (soft news broadcasts). Consequently, we do not know whether the public groups soft print and soft broadcasting together. We do know, however, that these soft sources are very much a package in the public mind.

Those who score "high" on this dimension are, in most respects, the mirror image of those who think positively about serious (special) news sources. People giving high believability scores to soft news sources are likely to be low in income, low in education, and uninterested in the press or national politics.

Personalities. To this point the dimensions of believability have helped us group news organizations. But these data also produce a fourth factor—indeed a powerful factor, but one that runs not to organizations so much as news *personalities*.

Loading on this dimension are all the anchors, past and present, and all the most visible network news correspondents. Factor loadings seem to be directly related to the amount of air time these personalities receive. Anchors load most heavily; correspondents load the least. One might be tempted to regard this factor as evidence that the anchors not only achieve high levels of believability, but that they also define a media "class" in the public mind.

There are real differences between a factor that is built around types of sources and one that builds around individuals. Still, there is little question, given the strength of this factor, that the public does award (or deny) believability on the basis of celebrity, or at least "visibility."

THE BELIEVABILITY OF PRINT AND TELEVISION

In the literature dealing with credibility, no "issue" has generated more research, or disputation, than what one might call the "Roper" issue—whether television is more believable than print.[5] According to one study, at least 14 scholarly articles have used the Roper question (in one form or another), trying to answer what Roper first asked in 1959 (Gaziano and McGrath, 1985) or trying to dispute the Roper approach per se (Shaw, 1973).

Our own research approached this issue directly and indirectly. Looking at the most direct test of the Roper thesis, there is some hard evidence to support the theory of television as more believable. When asked "Are there any specific types of news organizations that you feel are likely to get the facts straight," our respondents mentioned television sources over print sources in a ratio of three-to-two. Yet respondents also said that local television is *less* likely to be factual than the nation's major dailies.

Our factor analysis also indicates that the public clearly differentiates among types of broadcast sources. While the networks and the local broadcast news outlets do hang together closely in public thinking, other broadcast sources are evaluated as very much separate from network news or local television. When respondents are given specific news organizations for evaluation, the advantage television seemingly enjoys slips considerably. "Soft" television is far less believable than "hard" print.

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[5] Since 1959, the Roper Organization has repeatedly asked the following item to determine the relative credibility of general news sources. "If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines, and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe—the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?" (Roper, 1985).

Television news*people* tend to do very well in terms of believability: anchormen do especially well. But here, too, the issue is clouded. Phil Donahue, a television personality, does badly.

Conclusions

No conclusion is more important than our first: there is no believability crisis for the press. While our data show that the public has serious reservations about some press techniques, the clear majority of the public considers the press believable—and considers specific, mainline sources as substantially more believable than "the press" in general.

Second, we conclude that opinions about believability are broadly shared among the various social and political groups in America that typically divide our politics. Even when we turned to the factor analysis, the demographic profiles for those scoring high (or low) on the various factors were, at best, tendencies.

Third, we conclude that believability does not inhere in any one particular technology. To a degree, the Roper issue—and the Roper thesis—presupposes a classification of news media that doesn't conform well with public attitudes concerning believability. Given a chance to rate specific sources, the public makes clear that technology (print versus video news) is *not* the hook upon which its opinions hang. In essence, this debate about print versus broadcast news is somewhat misdirected.

Fourth, while personality is a factor in believability—and while some Americans trust persons as opposed to sources—the majority of the public still assigns believability more as a factor of organization than celebrity. What matters most is neither personality nor technology. What matters most is news "type," where "type" pertains mainly to the *kind* of journalism the source is perceived to be practicing. And major establishment press sources are grouped together as believable—whether print or broadcast.

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THE EVAPORATING INDEPENDENTS

REMOVING THE "INDEPENDENT" OPTION FROM THE NES PARTY IDENTIFICATION QUESTION

PATRICK J. KENNEY AND
TOM W. RICE

Abstract In this brief paper we contend that the number and composition of individuals identifying with no political party may change substantially when the "Independent" option is omitted from the classic National Election Study (NES) party identification question. Data from two surveys of Vermont residents reveal that when the independent choice is not presented the percentage of self-identified independents drops significantly. Moreover, the relationship between age and partisanship varied depending on whether or not the nonpartisan choice was given. When the independent option was announced, a much higher percentage of younger than older respondents chose the option, but with the nonpartisan choice omitted, more older individuals actually opted to identify as independents. A similar analysis using nationwide survey data from the Roper Organization and NES supports our Vermont conclusions.

The increase in Americans not claiming allegiance to a political party is one of the most significant trends in United States electoral politics over the last quarter century. As gauged by the widely used National Election Study (NES) question "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?" the percentage of respondents selecting the independent option has grown from just above 20% in the 1950s and early 1960s to approximately 35% in the 1970s and early 1980s. Not surprisingly, this increase has been studied intensely, with scholars researching what the shift signals for the future of the party system (Burnham, 1970; Sundquist, 1983), who

PATRICK J. KENNEY is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Arizona State University. TOM W. RICE is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Vermont. The names of the authors appear in alphabetical order, implying that this study is in every way a collaborative enterprise. The authors thank John E. Stanga and Nicholas L. Danigelis for their assistance in developing this article.

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are the new independents (Abramson, 1976; Converse, 1976; Shively, 1979; Claggett, 1981; Norpoth and Rusk, 1982), and what prompted the movement away from parties (Burnham, 1970; Jennings and Niemi, 1974; Jennings and Markus, 1984).

While such attention has yielded a rich understanding of the trend toward political independence as measured by the NES question, it is important to remember that the NES query is only one way of tapping partisanship. Indeed, recent research has revealed partisanship to be a much more complex psychological concept than recognized a few decades ago. For example, Katz (1979), Valentine and Van Wingen (1980), and Weisberg (1980) contend that partisanship is multidimensional—that a person can be both a partisan and an independent simultaneously. These and other studies (Wattenberg, 1981; Miller and Wattenberg, 1983) suggest the need to employ a variety of partisanship measures when studying the trend toward political independence. Put more strongly, to rely too heavily on the NES party identification question is to risk not fully understanding the recent shifts in party allegiance. The purpose of the present study is to examine this concern. Specifically, we show that altering just slightly the wording in the NES question apparently results in a shift in partisan responses. In addition, closer inspection suggests that the shift in partisanship produced by the altered NES survey instrument is due almost entirely to movement among younger individuals.

Research Design and Findings

As noted above, the standard NES party identification question includes "Independent" as a partisanship choice. While offering the independent category is certainly acceptable, it is quite likely that it enhances the chance that a respondent will identify as an independent. Research by Schuman and Presser (1981) and Bishop (1985) has demonstrated that individuals more readily select a middle response alternative when presented the option than when it is not offered. Although the independent category is not explicitly the middle alternative in the NES party identification question, it may well serve as such for a great number of people. The initial concern of this study, then, was to establish the effect of including the independent category in the party identification question. To do this we compared the results of two random sample surveys of residents of the state of Vermont. The first survey, conducted in 1984, employed a party identification question very similar to the NES question. In the second, conducted a year later, the independent option was inadvertently omitted. The omission conveniently provided us the baseline necessary to examine the effects

Table 1. Party Identification, Vermont Surveys

Party Identification	"Independent" Included (1984)	"Independent" Omitted (1985)
Democrat	24.5%	28.0%
Independent	47.0	37.5
Republican	22.4	28.4
Other/Don't know	6.1	6.1
N	412	503

of including the independent option (for question wording and a description of the survey methods see the Appendix).

Table 1 summarizes the results of the party identification questions from the Vermont surveys. As anticipated, omitting the independent choice was associated with a reduction in the percentage of respondents calling themselves independents.[1] The magnitude of the fall was

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[1] Table 1 reveals that a larger percentage of Vermonters call themselves independents than individuals nationwide. The 1984 survey has 47.0% of Vermonters reporting as independents, while the SRC survey that year found 29.0% of Americans calling themselves independents. This political independence of Vermonters has long been recognized (Bryan, 1974; Peirce, 1976), and manifested itself recently in John Anderson's strong showing in the state in the 1980 presidential contest. Despite the large percentage of independents in Vermont, we see no reason why the broad trends in the forthcoming analysis could not be extrapolated nationwide.

The second half of the NES party identification question was asked in both the 1984 and 1985 surveys. The wording was indentical to that used by NES. Respondents who indicated they were Republicans or Democrats to the first part were asked, "Would you call yourself a strong (Republican/Democrat) or a not very strong (Republican/Democrat)?" Interviewees who identified themselves as independents to the first part were asked, "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?" Because the independent option was not an offered alternative to the first part of the party identification question in the 1985 survey, only those 1985 respondents who voiced their independent status without prompting were asked whether they felt close to the Republican or Democratic party.

The results of the party identification question after the follow-up probe was asked were

	1984	*1985*
Strong Democrats	12.6%	12.5%
Weak Democrats	11.9	15.5
Leaning Democrats	17.7	11.7
Independents	15.3	17.3
Leaning Republicans	14.0	8.5
Weak Republicans	9.6	16.7
Strong Republicans	12.8	11.7
Other/Don't know	6.1	6.1

It is interesting to note that the summation of the strong, weak, and leaning partisans across each survey produced quite similar percentages (78.6% for 1984 and 76.6% for 1985).

substantial, from 47.0% to 37.5%, or 9.5 percentage points. The chi-square statistic for Table 1 is 9.24, indicating that the drop in independents was significant at the .05 level. (When the "other" category is omitted and the data are partitioned into independents and partisans—Democrats and Republicans—the chi-square value is 8.92, significant at the .01 level.) The possibility exists, of course, that the reduction was due not to changes in question wording, but to a drop in self-identified independents over the year between surveys. While it is not possible to sort this out definitively with the data at hand, the regional Gallup Poll party identification data provides a modest check. According to the data (Gallup Poll, 1984, 1986), the percentage of independents in the East stayed almost constant over the period, with 25.0% of those surveyed claiming independence in the fall of 1984 compared with 26.0% one year later. The evidence, then, suggests that the drop in Vermonters who identified as independents was very likely due to omitting the independent option from the party identification question.

Our Vermont analysis may be partially replicated at the national level using survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research and NES. In a 15–16 October 1986 nationwide opinion poll the Roper Organization asked, "Regardless of how you may have voted in the past, what do you usually consider yourself—a Democrat, a Republican, some other party, or what?" Although this party identification question is not identical to the NES question minus the independent choice, the query does omit independent as a voiced option. When the results of the Roper question were compared with the 1984 NES data the pattern apparent in the Vermont analysis was repeated.[2] Table 2 shows that 33.9% of the NES respondents selected independent when presented the option, but in the Roper survey, where the independent option was not mentioned, only 21.8% voluntarily identified themselves as independents. The chi-square statistic for Table 2 is 52.95, indicating significance at the .001 level.

We turned our attention next to examining the relationship between age and party affiliation across the two Vermont surveys. Previous research has determined that younger individuals are more likely to identify as independents than older people (Shively, 1979; Miller and Wattenberg, 1983). Many of the young, scholars argue, have simply not developed the interest in politics which correlates with party affiliation. Given this, we anticipated that more young than old Vermont respondents would identify as independents to both the traditional NES question and the same question with the independent op-

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[2] It is unfortunate that there is a two-year time difference between the NES and Roper polls. However, at the time of this writing the 1986 NES data were not available and, according to Roper personnel, their 1986 question was not asked any nearer 1984.

Table 2. Party Identification, National Surveys

Party Identification	NES "Independent" Included (1984)	Roper "Independent" Omitted (1986)
Democrat	36.6%	41.7%
Independent	33.9	21.8
Republican	27.0	32.0
Other/Don't know	2.5	4.5
N	2237	1008

tion removed. Our expectations were only partially sustained. Table 3 reveals that when the independent option was mentioned, more young than old respondents selected it; approximately 54% of Vermonters aged 18 to 40 identified as independents compared to roughly 41% of those over 40. Surprisingly, however, when the independent option was not voiced, slightly more older than younger respondents volunteered independent status; across the four age categories the percent of Vermonters claiming independence increased gradually, from 34.4% among those 18 to 30 to 41.0% among those over 60.[3] Also quite striking, the percentage of respondents over 40 who identified as independents stayed almost constant across the two surveys, suggesting that older Vermont independents are firmly attached to their nonpartisan status. In sharp contrast, the percentage of independents among those 18 to 40 dropped dramatically when the independent choice was omitted. A three-way interaction test (Davis, 1975) revealed the relationship between age, question wording, and partisanship to be significant at the .05 level, $t = 2.87$. (For this test the "other" category was omitted. Democrats and Republicans were combined into a partisan category, and the age variable was collapsed into 18 to 40 and over 40.)[4]

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[3] Previous research on offering and omitting middle alternatives (Schuman and Presser, 1981; Bishop, 1985) has not found aggregate opinion to increase with age, but such research has not used the party identification question.

[4] The age categories 18 to 40 and over 40 were selected for two reasons. First, there appeared to be a natural break in the data at that point. Second, and perhaps more important, 40 seemed a likely cut point on theoretical grounds. The 18 to 40 group includes the baby boom cohort and those even younger. The baby boom generation has always displayed political independence (Jennings and Markus, 1984) and the post–baby boom cohort should also include many independents simply because they have not had the time to accumulate the set of political experiences that help foster partisan loyalties. Conversely, those 41 and over have had the time to develop strong party ties and, moreover, were socialized in times when political parties were stronger.

Table 3. Party Identification by Age, Vermont Surveys

	Age							
	18–30		31–40		41–59		60+	
Party Identification	"Independent" Included (1984)	"Independent" Omitted (1985)	"Independent" Included (1984)	"Independent" Omitted (1985)	"Independent" Included (1984)	"Independent" Omitted (1985)	"Independent" Included (1984)	"Independent" Omitted (1985)
Democrat	18.6%	27.7%	23.1%	31.7%	28.9%	31.4%	25.0%	20.5%
Independent	54.7	34.4	53.7	36.6	42.1	39.8	40.6	41.0
Republican	19.8	34.4	19.4	28.2	23.7	23.7	26.0	28.2
Other/Don't know	7.0	3.4	3.7	3.5	5.3	5.1	8.3	10.3
N	86	119	108	142	114	118	96	117

Table 4. Party Identification by Age, National Surveys

	Age							
Party Identification	18–30 NES "Independent" Included (1984)	18–29 Roper "Independent" Omitted (1986)	31–40 NES "Independent" Included (1984)	30–44 Roper "Independent" Omitted (1986)	41–59 NES "Independent" Included (1984)	45–59 Roper "Independent" Omitted (1986)	60+ NES "Independent" Included (1984)	60+ Roper "Independent" Omitted (1986)
Democrat	31.4%	37.4%	32.6%	43.8%	41.5%	45.1%	41.1%	42.0%
Independent	41.5	15.8	37.3	25.0	30.1	22.1	26.0	23.8
Republican	24.0	42.7	27.0	25.4	26.4	28.4	31.1	31.7
Other/Don't know	3.1	4.1	3.1	5.8	2.0	4.4	1.8	2.5
N	621	279	515	306	554	197	547	222

A modest replication of these intriguing findings is again possible using the Roper Center and NES data. Table 4 presents the responses to the party identification questions from the two surveys controlling for age. (The Roper Center age categories vary slightly from those used throughout the rest of our study because the Center confined respondents' choices to these categories.)[5] The data conform closely to the Vermont results; when the independent option was given, younger respondents were more likely to select it than older interviewees, but when the independent choice was not mentioned, the young were no more likely than the old to volunteer nonpartisan status. Those 18 to 29 were actually the least likely to voice independence. A three-way interaction test (Davis, 1975) showed the data in Table 4 to be significant at the .05 level, $t = 2.29$. As above, before testing the "other" category was dropped, Democrats and Republicans were combined, and the age categories were recoded into 18 to 40 and over 40 for the NES study, and 18 to 44 and over 44 for the Roper survey.

Discussion

The above analysis reveals that patterns of partisanship may vary depending on the measurement technique employed. Data from two surveys of Vermont residents suggest that simply omitting "Independent" as an announced option in the standard NES party identification question prompts significantly fewer individuals to call themselves independents. A partial replication using nationwide data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research and NES showed much the same. With respect to party identification generally, these findings serve as a reminder of the difficulty of quantifying psychological attachment to a political party—even a minor alteration to a survey instrument can elicit a very different response.

Concerning recent trends in party identification specifically, the results bring to light an interesting relationship between age and political independence. Previous research indicates that the young are much more likely than the old to claim independence, but the Vermont data suggest that this may be contingent on the party identification instrument used. When omitting the independent option from the NES party identification question the percentage of young people choosing political independence was actually less than the percentage of older individuals opting for the nonpartisan position. And once again, comparable nationwide data from Roper and NES support the Vermont findings. This raises an interesting possibility: if the NES question had never included the independent option perhaps the percentage of nonpartisans would have remained much more stable over the last two decades. After all, the swelling of the independent ranks was due primarily to the large number of young who joined the electorate claiming independence.

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[5] In a separate analysis the NES age variable was recoded to match the Roper age categories. Once recoded, the NES cell percentages vary only slightly from those in Table 4 and the relationship is still significant.

Appendix: Survey Methods

For each of the surveys we began by assembling all of the Vermont telephone directories. From these directories two random samples of 1,000 residential telephone numbers were selected, one sample for each survey. We decided not to employ a random digit dialing technique because only 5% of the residential telephone numbers in the state are not listed in the directories, according to New England Telephone officials. All 1,000 numbers from both samples were called once. The first survey, conducted 6–7 October 1984, resulted in 412 useable interviews. Three completed questionnaires were discarded because of coding errors, 283 calls went unanswered, and 35 were disconnected numbers. The remaining 267 numbers reached individuals who refused to participate. The second survey, conducted 26–27 October 1985, produced 503 useable questionnaires. Of the remaining numbers, six resulted in completed interviews discarded because of coding problems, 226 calls went unanswered, 30 were disconnected numbers, and 235 calls reached individuals who refused to be interviewed. University of Vermont students, as part of class projects, served as interviewers. We verified the students' interviews by calling back approximately 5% of the respondents in each survey; in every case the respondent indicated that he or she had been interviewed.

A comparison of demographic data across surveys suggests similar sample composition. For instance, the breakdown for household income found 50.2% of the respondents reported making less than $20,000 in the 1984 survey compared to 52.6% the 1985 survey. As another example, 54.1% of the 1984 respondents were female compared to 53.5% of the 1985 respondents. The demographic variable which showed the most variance across surveys was age. When dichotomized, 48.0% of the 1984 respondents reported to be 40 or younger against 52.6% of the 1985 interviewees. Even here the difference is far from significant statistically (chi-square = 1.89, $p > .20$). Moreover, since a good portion of our analysis examines changes in party identification within age groups rather than between age groups, the minor differences in the age distributions across surveys are even less of a concern.

Below are the party identification questions asked of Vermonters for the analysis presented in Tables 1 and 2.

October 1984 survey: "Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican, or Independent?"

October 1985 survey: "Generally speaking, do you consider yourself to be a Democrat or Republican?"

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THE POLLS—A Report

THE IMPACT OF NUCLEAR ACCIDENTS ON ATTITUDES TOWARD NUCLEAR ENERGY

CONNIE DE BOER AND
INEKE CATSBURG

A nuclear power plant exploded in Chernobyl, Russia, on 26 April 1986. Cities and countries near the plant suffered from a high rate of radioactive fallout, but countries farther away like the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Great Britain also measured an increased level of radioactivity in the air, water, and soil. The incident was not the first accident in a nuclear plant: the accident at Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania, occurred on 28 March 1979, Great Britain also had trouble with a nuclear plant in Sellafield in 1985, and leaks have been found in nuclear plants in France and West Germany. This report concentrates on public reactions to these incidents and on longer-term changes that have occurred in public opinion on nuclear energy. Results of public opinion surveys from the United States, Canada, and European countries are presented.

After the accident at Three Mile Island there was no remarkable change in the perception of the safety of nuclear power plants in the United States. In Great Britain, shortly after the accident in Chernobyl, there was an increase in the percentages considering nuclear power plants not very safe and even dangerous. However, a year after the Chernobyl accident the survey results of this question are again very similar to the very stable answering patterns which were found in the previous years.

Similar to the results of the question on safety, British support for the construction of a nuclear power station in Britain was very stable in the period before Chernobyl. The percentage opposing construction then increased sharply, but tended to return to its "normal" level in 1987. In the United States opposition to the building of a nuclear power plant within five miles of one's home has increased steadily.

In Great Britain the percentage of the public wishing to increase

CONNIE DE BOER is Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the Baschwitz Institute, c/o Department of Communication, University of Amsterdam. INEKE CATSBURG, formerly Associate Researcher at the Baschwitz Institute, is currently employed in the banking industry.

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nuclear power generation declined in the period from July 1979 to January 1986. Shortly after Chernobyl there was a sharp drop in the percentages of the public favoring an increase in nuclear power generation. But similar to the British questions on safety and the construction of a nuclear power plant in one's neighborhood, this change in public opinion was temporary.

In all the countries from which polls are presented in this article, the long term trend in public opinion has been against the use of nuclear energy. The biggest shifts in public opinion on nuclear energy issues coincide with major nuclear accidents. However, these large changes in public opinion are likely to be temporary.

Indebtedness is expressed to the following research organizations for their permission to publish results of surveys conducted by them:

CBS/NYT—CBS News/*New York Times* Poll, New York
CIPO—Canadian Institute for Public Opinion, Toronto
Demoskopie—Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, Allensbach, West Germany
EMNID—EMNID-Institut GmbH & Co., Bielefeld, West Germany
Eurodim—Eurodim, Athens, Greece
Gallup—Gallup Organization, Princeton
Harris—Louis Harris and Associates, Orlando
MORI—Market & Opinion Research International, London
NIPO—Netherlands Institute of Public Opinion, Amsterdam
NOP—NOP Market Research Ltd., London
NOS—Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, Hilversum, Netherlands
SCP—Sociocultural Planning Bureau, Rijswijk, Netherlands
SOC—Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Ltd., London

The dates given with the tables refer to the date the survey was carried out. The results are based on nationwide representative samples of adults. The definition of "adults" is not the same in all countries or for all research organizations. The tables indicate which age group was questioned in the survey (e.g., 16+ or 18+). When this indication is missing, the original publication only mentioned a sample of adults. The respondents were questioned either in person at their homes or by telephone (indicated by "tel."). When the size of the sample was specified in the original publication, this information is reproduced.

Questions about the data and requests for additional information should be addressed to C. de Boer, The Polls Archives, Oude Hoogstraat 24, 1012 CE Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Saliency of Nuclear Accidents

Great Britain—SOC/BBC TV: Have you heard or read about the recent accident in the Russian nuclear power station?
USA—CBS/NYT: Have you heard or read anything about the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania?

	Yes	*No*	*No Opinion*	
USA, 5–7 Apr 1979, Three Mile Island (tel.)	96	3	1	*N* = 1158
Great Britain, 2–3 May 1986, Chernobyl	99	1	—	*N* = 489

West Germany—Demoskopie: A few days ago there was a serious accident in an atomic plant in America. Did you follow the reports about it closely, or did it not especially interest you?

	Followed It Closely	*Didn't Especially Interest Me*	*Didn't Hear About It*	
Apr 1979 (16+)	82	18	—	*N* = 588

Safety of Nuclear Power Plants

USA—Harris: Now let me ask you about some things that some people have said are problems associated with nuclear power being used as a source of energy for electric power. Do you think [*read each item*] is a major problem connected with nuclear power plants, a minor problem, or hardly a problem at all? (tel., 18+)
The escape of radioactivity into the atmosphere

	Major Problem	*Minor Problem*	*Hardly a Problem*	*Not Sure*
Feb 1983	46	30	18	6
Apr 1979	62	26	8	4
Nov 1976	57	17	14	12
May 1975	47	28	13	12

USA—Harris: Now I am going to read some statements about nuclear power plants. For each, would you tell me if you feel it is completely true, partly true, partly untrue, or completely untrue. (tel., 18+)
A major radiation leakage from a nuclear power plant can cause fallout that can kill large numbers of people.

	True	*Untrue*	*Not Sure*	
Apr 1979	84	9	7	*N* = 1510
1978	61	16	16	

Great Britain—SOC: From what you have read or heard, how safe do you think nuclear power stations are?

	Very Safe	*Fairly Safe*	*Not Very Safe*	*Dangerous (vol.)*	*Don't Know*
Dec 1987	14	45	34	4	3
Mar 1987	18	46	28	5	3

	Very Safe	*Fairly Safe*	*Not Very Safe*	*Dangerous (vol.)*	*Don't Know*
Feb 1987	12	47	33	4	4
Nov 1986	14	47	30	6	4
June 1986	11	41	39	5	3
May 1986	9	35	41	10	4
Jan 1986	17	47	25	5	6
Mar 1985	16	45	28	6	6
Oct 1984	15	46	26	6	7
Jan 1984	14	49	27	6	3
Apr 1983	18	44	26	5	7
Jan 1980	13	51	22	7	8

Great Britain—NOP: There has been much discussion in the news recently about the nuclear waste reprocessing plant at Sellafield in Cumbria. The plant has been criticised for its number of leaks of radio-active matter, but the government claims that the leaks are not significant and that the plant is safe. Do you personally think Sellafield is safe enough or not?

	Safe	*Not Safe*	
21–22 Mar 1986 (15+)	17	69	N = 1019
Men	23	65	
Women	12	71	

Great Britain—SOC/BBC TV: Are you optimistic or pessimistic about our ability to dispose of waste from nuclear power plants in an acceptable way?

	Optimistic	*Pessimistic*	*Don't Know*
Nov 1986	25	61	14
June 1985	30	59	11

Greece—Eurodim: A few years ago, DEI [the Public Power Company], to face the high prices and the shortage of oil, had decided to build nuclear plants for the production of electric energy. Nevertheless, some are afraid that the nuclear plants are dangerous. Do you think that they are:

	Not dangerous and should be built	*Dangerous but should be built*	*Dangerous and should not be built*	*Don't know*	
May 1986*	3	24	73	0	N = 700
May 1981*	6	34	56	4	N = 600

* Surveys held in the Greater Athens area, where 35% of the total Greek population live. Nationwide surveys have shown that the capital's population is 5–7% more left-wing than the total Greek population.

Great Britain—SOC/BBC TV; USA—Gallup/Newsweek: Are you optimistic or pessimistic about our ability to run nuclear generating plants without serious accidents?

	Great Britain			*USA (tel.)*			
	Optimistic	*Pessimistic*	*Don't Know*	*Optimistic*	*Pessimistic*	*Don't Know*	
Nov 1986	42	45	13				
30 Apr–1 May 1986				50	39	11	N = 762
June 1985	47	41	12	55	35	10	

USA—Harris: All in all, from what you have heard or read, how safe are nuclear power plants that produce electric power . . . very safe, somewhat safe, or not so safe? (tel., 18+)

	Safe	*Not Safe*	*Not Sure*
6–9 Apr 1979	67	30	3
1978	64	28	8
1977	65	23	12
1975	64	18	18

Nuclear Power Plants in the Area

Great Britain—SOC: What would you do if a nuclear power station were to be built in your area?

	Agree	*Not Oppose, but Anxious*	*Oppose*	*No Feelings*	*Don't Know*
Dec 1987	11	23	59	4	3
Mar 1987	13	26	50	8	2
Feb 1987	10	28	50	9	3
Nov 1986	12	26	51	8	3
June 1986	9	23	59	7	1
May 1986	9	17	64	6	4
Jan 1986	15	27	45	9	4
Feb 1985	15	25	48	9	3
Oct 1984	14	27	44	11	5
Jan 1984	15	28	44	10	3
Apr 1983	14	27	42	13	3
Jan 1980	17	29	37	10	7
Oct 1979	16	27	42	10	6
Sep 1979	16	24	42	11	6
July 1979	17	28	42	8	6
May 1976	19	25	34	12	10

Canada—CIPO: What would you do if a nuclear power station were to be built in your area—would you agree to its being built, would you not oppose it although you would feel anxious about it, or would you oppose it? (18+)

	Agree	*Not Oppose, but Anxious*	*Oppose*	*Don't Know*	
5–7 June 1986	8	17	71	4	*N* = 1022
1983	14	22	59	5	
1976	28	23	35	14	

USA—Gallup/Newsweek: Would you be against the construction of a nuclear power plant in this area, within five miles of where you live? (tel.)

	Against Plant	*Not Against*	*No Opinion*	
30 Apr–1 May 1986	70	26	4	*N* = 762
Apr 1979	60	33	7	
June 1976	45	42	13	

USA—CBS/NYT: Would you approve or disapprove if the nuclear power plants for generating electricity are built in your community? (tel.)

	Approve	*Disapprove*	*No Opinion*	
30 Apr–1 May 1986	25	70	5	*N* = 695
5–7 Apr 1979	38	56	6	*N* = 1158
July 1977	55	33	12	

The Nuclear Energy Issue

Netherlands—NIPO/SCP: What do you think: should the Dutch nuclear power stations be closed down soon, or should they continue operating? (18+)

	Quickly Closed Down	*Continue Operating*	*No Opinion*	
7–8 Feb 1983	50	42	8	*N* = 1015
Nov 1981	44	44	12	

Netherlands—NOS: Are you for or against large-scale use of nuclear energy for generating electric power? (tel., 18+)

	For	*Against*	*Depends*	*Don't Know*	
21–22 Sep 1979	24	52	10	13	*N* = 521
12 Apr 1977	27	38	16	19	*N* = 379

Great Britain—SOC: At present, about 20 percent* of the total electricity in Great Britain comes from nuclear power. What do you think should be the development of nuclear power generation in this country?

	Increase Nuclear Power Generation	*Not Develop Anymore*	*Stop Generating Nuclear Power*	*Don't Know*
Mar 1987	31	39	22	8
Feb 1987	27	42	24	7
Nov 1986	25	42	26	7
June 1986	19	41	33	7
May 1986	18	39	36	8
Jan 1986	33	31	22	13
Feb 1985	34	33	20	12
Oct 1984	35	33	21	11
Jan 1984	32	34	22	12
Apr 1983	30	36	19	15
Jan 1980	41	28	18	14
Oct 1979	42	26	16	16
Sep 1979	45	21	17	17
July 1979	47	25	14	14
May 1976	39	21	15	25

* 10% in the questions of 1976–1985, 12% in 1986.

Great Britain—MORI/Reader's Digest: Which of these statements comes nearest to what you think? (9–13 Jan 1987, 15+, N = 886)

I am *well informed* about nuclear energy and *support* the further construction of nuclear power stations in Germany/Britain.	12
I am *not very well informed* about nuclear energy and *support* the further construction of nuclear power stations in Germany/Britain.	26
I am *well informed* about nuclear energy and *oppose* the further construction of nuclear power stations in Germany/Britain.	17
I am *not very well informed* about nuclear energy and *oppose* the further construction of nuclear power stations in Germany/Britain.	37
No opinion	8

West Germany—EMNID/Der Spiegel: On the subject of nuclear energy, some say that we must build nuclear power stations in the years to come if we are to preserve our prosperity. Others say that the risks are too great, also that no further nuclear power stations should be built. Which view do you agree with? (tel., 14+)

	Favor Building	*Against Building*
Aug 1986	18	80
June 1986	18	82
6–8 May 1986	29	69
Mar 1982	52	46
Oct 1981	52	46
Apr 1980	56	42

West Germany—EMNID: Are you in favor of the principle of building nuclear power stations, do you tend to oppose it, or does it not really matter to you whether further nuclear power stations are built or not? (14+)

	In Favor	*Against*	*Don't Care*	
16 Mar–1 Apr 1985	30	43	26	N = 1018
1983	34	42	22	
Feb 1981	41	31	28	N = 1016
June 1979	30	38	31	N = 1001
1974	44	19	36	

USA—CBS/NYT: Would you approve or disapprove of building more nuclear power plants to generate electricity? (tel.)

	Approve	*Disapprove*	*No Opinion*	
30 Apr–1 May 1986	34	59	7	N = 695
June 1985	40	44	16	
Apr 1979	46	41	13	N = 1158
July 1977	69	21	10	

USA—Harris: In general, do you favor or oppose the building of more nuclear power plants in the United States? (tel., 18+)

	Favor	*Oppose*	*Not Sure*
Feb 1983	37	51	12
Nov 1980	47	47	6
May 1979	52	42	6
Apr 1979	47	45	8

	Favor	*Oppose*	*Not Sure*
Oct 1978	57	31	12
Mar 1978	55	25	20
July 1976	61	22	17
Mar 1975	63	19	18

Canada—CIPO: At present very little of the total electricity used in Canada comes from nuclear power generation, what do you think should happen? (18+)

	Nuclear Power Generation Should				
	Increase	*Not Develop More*	*Stop*	*Don't Know*	
5–7 June 1986	13	37	40	11	*N* = 1022
1983	23	36	24	17	
1982	20	35	31	14	
1981	31	27	23	19	
1980	30	27	27	16	
1979	23	34	29	14	
1978	35	29	15	21	
1976	41	20	14	25	

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THE EFFECTS OF THE RACE OF THE INTERVIEWER ON RACE-RELATED ATTITUDES OF BLACK RESPONDENTS IN SRC/CPS NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES

BARBARA A. ANDERSON
BRIAN D. SILVER AND
PAUL R. ABRAMSON

Abstract Previous research found substantial effects of the race of the interviewer on measures of civic attitudes and electoral participation of blacks in NES surveys from 1964, 1976, 1978, 1980, and 1984. This study extends the previous analysis in two ways: it uses data from two additional NES surveys, 1982 and 1986; and it focuses on the effects of the race of the interviewer on race-related attitudes. Blacks interviewed by whites were much more likely to express warmth and closeness toward whites than were blacks interviewed by blacks. But whereas there is no race-of-interviewer effect on blacks' expressions of warmth toward blacks, there is a clear race-of-interviewer effect on blacks' expressions of closeness toward blacks. The pattern of responses to the closeness items appears to result from the format of the question. The observed trend of decreasing expressed closeness of blacks toward blacks in NES surveys between 1976 and 1984 is an artifact of changes in the racial composition of the interviewer staff.

BARBARA A. ANDERSON is Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan. BRIAN D. SILVER is Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University. PAUL R. ABRAMSON is Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University. An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, 2–6 September 1987. The authors would like to thank Mike Coble and Harriet Dhanak for programming assistance; John Siebs and Maria Sanchez for managing the production of the interviewer data; Cynthia Buckley, Ellen Gordon, and Victoria Velkoff for research assistance; and Reynolds Farley and Howard Schuman for helpful advice. Data from the SRC/CPS National Election Studies were obtained through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. Interviewer data were obtained from the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. The authors paid for the SRC's services from research funds provided by the Population Studies Center of the University of Michigan. None of these individuals or organizations bears any responsibility for the analyses or conclusions.

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Race-of-interviewer effects appear on some policy questions (support for civil rights leaders, government spending on programs to support blacks) but not on others (school busing, government aid to minorities). Survey analysts need to test carefully for race-of-interviewer effects on items measuring attitudes in a given survey, when tracing trends in attitudes over time, and when evaluating alternative formulations of questions on race-related attitudes.

Few users of the data collected by major academic survey research organizations consider error or variability that might be introduced by the data production process. But however well theoretical concepts are defined, survey questions are formulated, and data are analyzed, the data are the product of an *interview*. The interview involves an interaction between interviewer and respondent in which the stimulus to the respondent is not just the "question" as it is written in the survey booklet but also the social context in which the question is asked.

Sudman and Bradburn (1974) identify three principal sources of variation in survey data quality: (1) the characteristics of the task (the form and content of the survey questions and the methods of asking them), (2) respondent characteristics, and (3) the interviewers' performance. This research focuses on one aspect of the third source of variation: the effect of the race of the interviewer. We examine the relation between the race of the interviewer and expressed attitudes by blacks on race-related issues. The data are from the National Election Study (NES) surveys conducted by the Survey Research Center (SRC) and the Center for Political Studies (CPS) of the University of Michigan for 1964, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, and 1986.

The scholarly literature concerning race-of-interviewer effects is small (for a succinct summary, see Schuman and Kalton, 1985). Previous research not based on NES surveys has shown that whether or not the respondent and the interviewer are of the same race does not always affect responses, even on race-related items; but the types of question for which the race of the interviewer is likely to have a substantial effect are those dealing with expressions of hostility or closeness toward members of different racial groups (Schuman and Converse, 1971; Schuman and Hatchett, 1974). Even so, studies of group consciousness or identity using NES data (e.g., Miller et al., 1981; Conover, 1984) have not considered the possible effect of the race of the interviewer. We shall show that for some measures of group identity and antipathy in NES surveys, the race of the interviewer by itself accounts for more of the variance in the responses of blacks than do the effects of the respondents' education, age, sex, and place of residence taken together.

Perhaps the main reason for the disregard of interviewer characteristics in NES surveys is that no information on the characteristics of interviewers has been included in the data sets distributed by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) for surveys from 1948 to 1984. The ICPSR provides limited information for the 1986 survey.[1]

For a previous study (Anderson, Silver, and Abramson, 1988), we obtained data directly from the SRC on the race of the interviewers for five NES surveys: 1964, 1976, 1978, 1980, and 1984.[2] We found sharp changes in the racial composition of the interviewer staff in NES surveys. We also found that the race of the interviewer had a strong effect on political attitudes and reported levels of electoral involvement and participation of black respondents in presidential election years. When interviewed by a black in the preelection survey, black respondents were more likely to express interest in elections, concern about which party won the election, and a strong sense of citizen duty. Black respondents were also much more likely *actually* to vote if they were interviewed by a black in the preelection survey than if they were interviewed by a white. Also, black nonvoters who were interviewed by a black in the postelection survey were more likely to report (falsely) that they voted than were blacks who were interviewed by whites.

Some of these effects of the race of the interviewer appear to be response effects and some involve change in actual postinterview behavior (e.g., in voter turnout). These results call into question the conventional wisdom that holds that one is more likely to obtain valid survey responses when the race of the interviewer is matched to that of the respondent (Backstrom and Hursh-César, 1981; Schuman and Kalton, 1985). They also illustrate that the race of the interviewer can affect attitudes and behaviors that are not explicitly race-related.

---

[1] Unfortunately, the information provided is potentially misleading because the racial categories used to designate interviewers in the 1986 NES are "white" and "nonwhite." More detailed information that we obtained directly from the Survey Research Center reveals that 18 of the 94 blacks who were interviewed by nonwhites were not interviewed by blacks, but instead by a member of another nonwhite racial group. To make our results comparable with the analyses in the previous six surveys, we have excluded these 18 blacks from the analysis.

[2] These surveys were chosen because in each of those years the SRC conducted a vote validation study in which local registration and voting records were checked to determine whether the survey respondents actually were registered and had voted. Comparison of the respondent's self-report with the vote validation information provides a check on the accuracy of the self-reports and permits an analysis of the relation between respondent characteristics, interviewer characteristics, and the accuracy of the vote self-report. The 1986 NES survey results also contain a vote validation study.

Race of the Interviewer and Race-Related Attitudes

This study extends our previous analysis (Anderson, Silver, and Abramson, 1988) in two ways. First, it employs data on the race of the interviewer in two additional NES surveys, 1982 and 1986.[3] Second, rather than focusing on general attitudes toward the political system and upon electoral participation, it focuses on race-related attitudes: toward racial groups, toward government policies that affect minorities, and toward civil rights leaders. In particular, we investigate the effects of the race of the interviewer on two measures of group affinity or hostility: "feeling thermometers" that are designed to gauge the respondent's affect toward specific groups; and measures of the "closeness" of the respondent to specific groups that are supposed to gauge the respondents' perception of the similarity between themselves and members of these groups.

Based on previous research (Schuman and Converse, 1971; Schuman and Hatchett, 1974), we expect to find a substantial effect of the race of the interviewer on responses to both the feeling thermometer and the closeness measure toward whites. The main reason for this, as stated by Schuman and Converse (1971), is that black respondents who are interviewed by whites will be reluctant to express negative attitudes toward whites out of the desire not to offend this "polite stranger" who has come into their household; in contrast, blacks interviewed by blacks will be more candid in expressing any negative feelings toward whites, since expression of such attitudes would not be offensive to a black interviewer.

Even if we were to find that blacks are less positive toward whites or more positive toward blacks when interviewed by a black than when interviewed by a white, this would not mean that the responses given to black interviewers are more valid or more truthful. Schuman and Converse (1971) also noted that black responses to black interviewers might be distorted. Any difference in the responses given to black interviewers and white interviewers is only a *difference* and does not by itself prove that the answers given to blacks or to whites are more valid.

[3] The article by Anderson, Silver, and Abramson (1988) was first presented as a paper at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in September 1986. The information about interviewer characteristics for studies prior to 1978 was not in machine-readable form. Thus, acquisition of this information required original coding from personnel files and interview booklets. For the 1964 NES we were not able to obtain interviewer data for those postelection interviewers for whom no identification number was given in the data files. These are all cases in which the postelection interviewer was a different person from the preelection interviewer—about 5% of the cases.

Based on previous research (Schuman and Converse, 1971; Schuman and Hatchett, 1974), we expect to find a smaller effect of the race of the interviewer on answers to questions about government policies and programs than to questions about racial groups. Support for government programs, such as school busing and aid to minority groups, may involve a multidimensional evaluation of the pros and cons of a given policy, the effects of which do not all benefit a particular ethnic or racial group. For example, the perceived desirability of using school busing may involve evaluation of the importance of having children in schools close to their homes, of the consequences of having children placed into schools where they may not be welcome, of the qualities of the particular schools to which children are to be bused, and of the desirability of racial integration in general.

In addition, we investigate the effects of the race of the interviewer on black respondents' statements about whether civil rights leaders have been pushing too fast or too slowly. We expect to find some effect of the race of the interviewer on responses to this question, with blacks being more willing to criticize civil rights leaders for pushing too slowly when they are interviewed by blacks than when they are interviewed by whites.

It is important to emphasize again that although one can observe differences in survey responses depending on the race of the interviewer, one cannot be certain whether the responses given to white interviewers or to black interviewers are more accurate. As Turner and Martin (1981:2) have observed, "Subjective phenomena are those that, in principle, can be directly known, if at all, only by the [respondents] themselves." In a similar vein, Sudman and Bradburn (1974:7) have stated:

> For attitudinal reports, we can speak only loosely about accuracy, and indeed, it would be better if we eliminated the term altogether. We can speak of the variability of the responses obtained by different methods or by the same method at different points in time. We can talk about the consistency of responses to different questions that are designed to measure the same attitude, or among related attitudes that we believe have some consistent logical relationship. But we cannot speak about accuracy in the strict sense without some external criterion to which everyone is willing to compare the response.

One can, however, investigate the sensitivity of subjective responses to the conditions of the interview, including the race of the interviewer. Even if one cannot prove that the answers under a given interview condition are more *accurate*, one can still show that the overall pattern of responses would have been *different* if the racial composition of the interviewer staff had differed, and therefore that the race of the interviewer should be taken into account in the survey design and analysis.

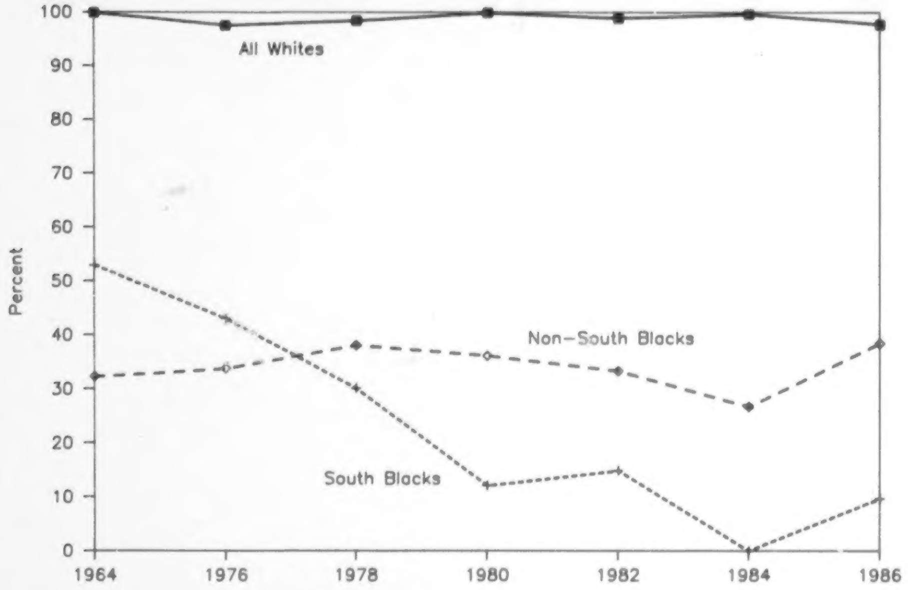

Figure 1. Percent of Respondents Interviewed by Interviewers of Own Race in NES Postelection Surveys

Race of the Interviewer in NES Surveys

Figure 1 shows the percent of all white respondents who were interviewed by whites and the percent of black respondents in the South and non-South who were interviewed by blacks in the seven NES postelection surveys for which we now have data.[4] In all surveys, almost all white respondents have been interviewed by whites. Thus, although responses by whites may be affected by the race of the interviewer, it is not possible to study race-of-interviewer effects for white respondents using the available data.

In all surveys, less than a majority of blacks have been interviewed by blacks (see also Table A2 in the Appendix). The proportion of blacks interviewed by blacks declined markedly between 1964 and 1984 in the South, and then increased modestly between 1984 and 1986. Outside the South, the proportion of blacks who were interviewed by blacks changed very little. The declining proportion of blacks who were interviewed by blacks means that any trends in black racial attitudes could be partly an artifact of change in the racial composition of the interviewer staff if, in fact, the race of the interviewer is correlated with the survey responses.

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[4] "South" includes states classified as "Solid South" in ICPSR codebooks: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. These include all states of the old Confederacy except Tennessee. We use the terms "non-South" and "North" interchangeably in this article.

Analysis of the Effect of the Race of the Interviewer on Race-Related Attitudes

We examine the answers given by black respondents to a variety of survey items that we thought might be sensitive on a priori grounds to the race of the interviewer. Thus, we are not searching for race-of-interviewer effects on all possible items. The analysis emphasizes questions that have appeared in more than one NES survey for two reasons.[5] First, such an emphasis allows us to examine some of the implications of changes in the racial composition of the interviewer staff over time. In addition to summarizing the trends for each item, we show what the trends would have been if the racial composition of the interviewer staff across surveys had remained unchanged since 1964. Second, what might appear to be a race-of-interviewer effect in a given survey could be a result of respondent characteristics or other factors, including random error owing to the small number of black respondents for each survey. Therefore, we pool the responses to a given attitudinal item from all the surveys in which the item was asked in order have a larger number of cases to conduct multivariate analyses.[6]

Although they did not examine the racial composition of the interviewer staffs for the surveys that they analyzed, Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo (1985:153) raised the possibility that the reported increasing conservatism of blacks between the 1950s and 1980s might be an artifact of the increasing proportion of blacks who were interviewed by whites. We shall show that change in the racial composition of the interviewer staff did in fact contribute to the reported change in some race-related attitudes of blacks in NES surveys, and that the aggregate levels (means and percentage distributions) in the responses often differed greatly according to the race of the interviewer. But not all such attitude measures were affected by the race of the interviewer, and even when the race of the interviewer made a difference, the direction of change in the attitudes from one survey to the next was usually the same whether the interviewer was black or white.

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[5] Appendix Table A1 shows the NES surveys in which given items were included and whether the item was asked in the preelection or the postelection interview.

[6] The pooled data set includes all black respondents from all seven of the NES surveys for whom we have race-of-interviewer data and for whom the interviewer was either a black or a white. The total number of cases in the pooled data set is 1,389. We do not weight the cases. Pooling of the cases has several benefits: (1) the larger *N* facilitates multivariate analysis; (2) the chance that any observed interviewer effects are the result of only a few interviewers is reduced; (3) the chance that observed effects in a single survey are due to just a few primary sampling units is reduced; and (4) the significance of differences between surveys (period effects) can be tested for directly.

INTERGROUP ATTITUDES

Feeling thermometers. Table 1 shows the mean warmth of black respondents toward blacks and toward whites on a feeling thermometer scale running from 0 (coldest possible) to 100 (warmest possible). The wording of the items is given in notes to the table. Figures 2a and 2b graph the average temperature on the feeling thermometers. The mean values across the surveys for all black respondents are joined by the solid line. The two dashed lines trace the mean values according to whether the respondent was interviewed by a white interviewer or a black interviewer. As shown in Figure 2a, at all dates, black respondents who were interviewed by a white expressed much warmer feelings toward whites than did black respondents who were interviewed by a black.

What would the trend in the overall mean temperature toward whites have been had the racial composition of the interviewer staff in NES surveys remained unchanged after 1964? One answer to this question is shown in Figure 2a. The dotted line shows what the trend in the overall average temperature toward whites would have been if the proportion of blacks who were interviewed by whites and by blacks had remained unchanged after 1964, but if the responses to interviewers of a given race at each date were the same as those actually reported for the given survey. Thus, the dotted line represents a synthetic calculation, a weighted average of the two dashed lines, with the weights being the proportion of interviewers of each race in 1964.[7]

If the racial composition of the interviewer staff had not changed after 1964, the overall trends would be the same as the reported trends. The average temperature toward whites would have risen from 1964 through 1980, dipped in 1982, and then risen between 1982 and 1984. However, in 1980, 1982, and 1984 the temperature toward whites

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[7] We shall show similar synthetic calculations for other attitude items. If the item was asked in the 1964 NES, the racial (black–white) distribution of the interviewers used for the synthetic calculation is based on the racial distribution of the interviewers for those respondents who answered the item in 1964. If the item was not asked in the 1964 NES, the racial distribution of the interviewers used for the synthetic calculation is based on the racial (black–white) distribution of all interviewers of all black respondents in the 1964 preelection survey (see Table A2).

These synthetic calculations are only an approximation. One reason for this is that we adjust only for the overall proportion of the interviewers (of black respondents) who were black or white, not for changes in the regional distribution of the interviewers or for other interviewer characteristics.

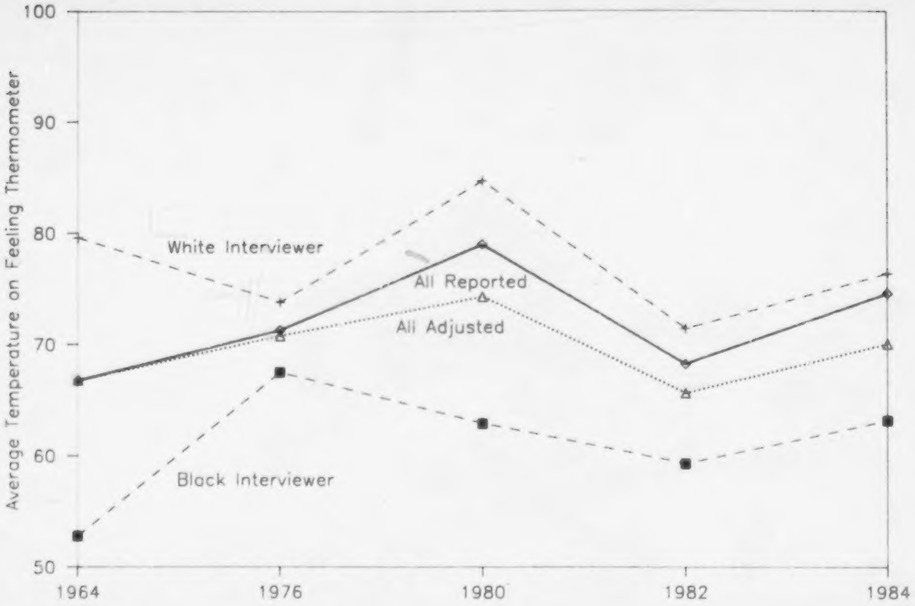

Figure 2a. Average Temperature on Feeling Thermometer of Blacks Toward Whites, as Reported for All Blacks and by Race of Interviewer, and as Adjusted to Reflect Distribution of Interviewers by Race in 1964

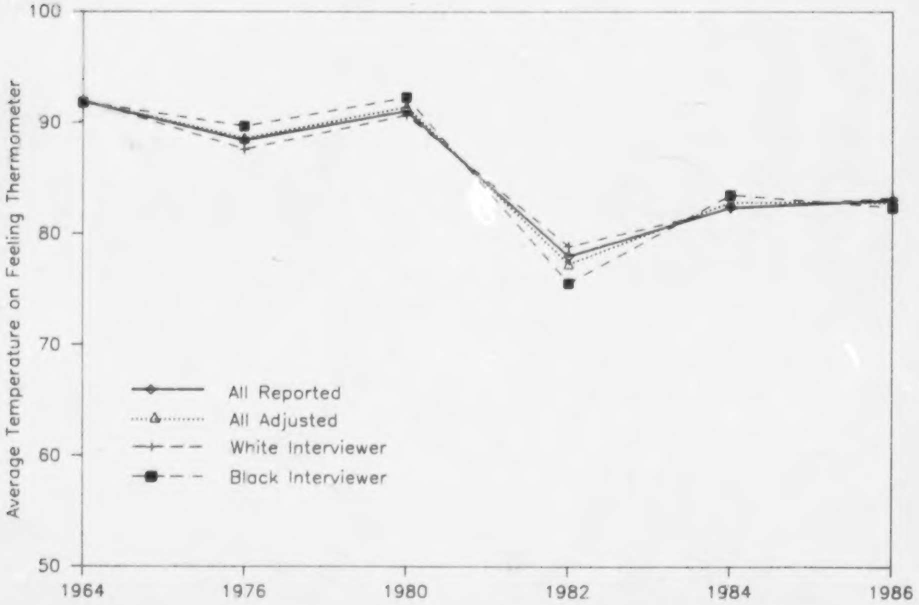

Figure 2b. Average Temperature on Feeling Thermometer of Blacks Toward Blacks, as Reported for All Blacks and by Race of Interviewer, and as Adjusted to Reflect Distribution of Interviewers by Race in 1964

Table 1. Mean Rating of Whites and Blacks on Feeling Thermometer for Black Respondents, by Race of Interviewer, 1964, 1976, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986

Race of Interviewer	1964[a]		1976[b]		1980		1982		1984[c]		1986	
	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*
						Whites Rated						
Black	52.8	74	67.5	65	62.9	39	59.3	36	63.2	11	—	—[d]
White	79.6	81	73.8	100	84.7	109	71.4	102	76.4	74		
Signif.	**		*		**		**		**			
Either	66.8	155	71.3	165	79.0	148	68.2	138	74.6	85	—	—
						Blacks Rated						
Black	91.8	74	89.7	67	92.3	42	75.6	36	83.5	10	82.4	70
White	92.0	81	87.6	102	90.7	110	78.9	105	82.3	75	83.3	223

Signif. Either	91.9	155	88.4	169	91.1	152	78.0	141	82.4	85	83.1	293

NOTES: The interviewer data in this and later tables pertain to the pre- or postelection survey corresponding to whether the item was asked in the pre- or postelection survey for the given year. The question asked (taken from 1976 survey):

We'd also like to get your feelings about some groups in American society. When I read the name of a group, we'd like you to rate it with what we call a feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorably and warm toward the group; ratings between 0 and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorably towards the group and that you don't care too much for that group. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward a group you would rate them at 50 degrees. If we come to a group you don't know much about, just tell me and we'll move on to the next one.

In 1964 and 1976, scores reported as 97 (the highest code reported on the thermometer items, to indicate the warmest rating) were recoded to 100.

Answers coded as DK, Can't Judge, or NA are treated as missing.

[a] The data for 1964 exclude cases in the "Negro Supplement."

[b] Although a weighting factor is usually employed with the 1976 survey, we use the unweighted results in this and subsequent tables.

[c] The postelection data for 1984 in this and later tables exclude cases in which the interviews were conducted by telephone.

[d] The feeling thermometer rating of whites was not included in the 1986 NES survey.

* Difference of means significant at $p = .10$ using a 2-tailed test.

** Difference of means significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

would have been lower than the observed temperature. For example, if the racial composition of the interviewer staff in 1984 had been the same as in 1964, the average temperature toward whites would have been 70 rather than 75.

The picture for warmth of feelings toward blacks, shown in Figure 2b, is very different. The responses given to white interviewers differed little from responses given to black interviewers. As a result, an adjustment for the change in the racial composition of the interviewer staff has a trivial and inconsistent effect on the reported average temperature toward blacks. Thus, Figures 2a and 2b show that although the race of the interviewer appears to have a substantial effect on stated warmth toward whites for black respondents, black respondents are willing to tell both black and white interviewers that they feel quite warm toward other blacks.

The differences in the responses given to white interviewers and black interviewers could be the result in any given survey of a small sample size or of differences in respondent characteristics, such as education, age, or place of residence. In addition, the assignment of interviewers by race is not random. Black interviewers are assigned to areas where most respondents are expected to be black. Previous analyses have demonstrated that blacks who were interviewed by blacks in NES surveys were more likely to reside in the central cities of northern SMSAs or in the South—where the neighborhoods in which the respondents resided were "mostly black" or "all black" (Anderson, Silver, and Abramson, 1988). In addition, blacks who were interviewed by blacks tended to have lower levels of formal education than blacks who were interviewed by whites. Hence, any apparent race-of-interviewer effects on racial attitudes are potentially an artifact of respondent characteristics.

To address the questions of sample size and of the effects of respondent characteristics, we performed OLS (ordinary least-squares) regression analyses for each of the feeling thermometers. For this purpose, we pooled the cases of black respondents from the seven NES surveys for which we had data on the race of the interviewer. Our goal is to determine whether the bivariate relations between the race of the interviewer and the responses to the feeling thermometer persist even after controls for respondent characteristics are introduced.[8]

The results are shown in Table 2. The regression estimates in which warmth of feeling toward whites is the dependent variable are presented in Equations 1 and 2, and the estimates in which warmth of feeling toward blacks is the dependent variable are given in Equations 3 and 4. The first equation for each dependent variable contains as independent variables only a set of control variables representing respondent characteristics; the second equation adds a race-of-interviewer dummy variable (1 if the interviewer was black, 0 if white). We chose as control variables a set of respondent characteristics that we expected to account for a large amount of the variance in the dependent variable; these were dummy variables representing the survey date and the respondent's education, age, sex, and region.[9]

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[8] Because of the small number of cases involved, it is also possible that any apparent effects of the race of the interviewer in a given survey are actually the effects of *particular*, individual interviewers. However, as shown in Table A2, many interviewers of both races are involved, and pooling the cases further reduces the possibility that a few interviewers are responsible for the effects observed in a given survey.

Our multivariate tests for the effects of the race of the interviewer are conservative, both because we included a large set of control variables and because we added the race-of-interviewer variable last. This approach is not designed to obtain the best possible explanation for each dependent variable. Rather, we wanted to determine whether the race-of-interviewer effects shown in our cross-tabulations were an artifact of respondent characteristics. For example, it was important to take into account variables, such as place of residence and education, that were related to whether the respondent was interviewed by a black.

We included a larger set of control variables than we would have if our aim had been to obtain the most parsimonious explanation of the socioeconomic and ecological factors that lead to variation in responses to these attitudinal items. Thus, the control variables that are in the equation could serve as surrogates for variables that are not included. Even if the control variables that were in the equation accounted for only a small proportion of the variance in the dependent variable, it is unlikely that a plausible alternative set of control variables would account for substantially more variance.

Although the size and the statistical significance of the coefficient for the race-of-interviewer variable are unaffected by the order in which it is entered in the equation, entering it last produces a conservative assessment of the magnitude of the effect of the race of the interviewer on the proportion of the variance explained in the dependent variable. Entering the race-of-interviewer variable last attributes any of the vari-

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[9] The regression coefficients for the dummy variables for the individual NES surveys can be interpreted in two ways. First, they represent the effects of unmeasured differences in the contexts in which the questionnaire items were asked in different surveys or in the methods used in the survey administration. Second, the coefficients can be interpreted as the mean difference in the responses between the given NES survey and the referent survey (the omitted category), net of the effects of the other variables that are explicitly controlled for in the equation. Thus, the coefficients for the NES variables could be used to measure the trend (or period effect) in the overall responses between surveys, net of differences due to the race of the interviewer and to the respondents' education, age, region, and sex.

Table 2. Regressions of Feeling Thermometers Toward Whites and Blacks on Characteristics of Black Respondents and Race of the Interviewer

	Dependent Variable							
	Feeling Toward Whites				Feeling Toward Blacks			
Dummy Independent	Equation 1		Equation 2		Equation 3		Equation 4	
Variable	*b*	*t*-ratio	*b*	*t*-ratio	*b*	*t*-ratio	*b*	*t*-ratio
Constant	57.5**	16.799	63.7**	19.031	89.0**	37.033	88.7**	35.931
Survey[a]								
1976 NES	2.9	1.162	1.8	.758	−4.2**	−2.086	−4.1**	−2.065
1980 NES	12.7**	5.026	9.1**	3.798	−.5	−.265	−.4	−.194
1982 NES	.5	.196	−2.8	−1.156	−14.1**	−6.774	−14.0**	−6.655
1984 NES	6.5**	2.131	1.3	.457	−10.1**	−4.123	−9.9**	−3.982
1986 NES					−8.8**	−4.831	−8.7**	−4.704
Education[b]								
College graduate	3.3	.920	1.3	.379	.5	.227	.6	.270
Some college	1.8	.679	1.2	.498	−.1	−.032	.0	−.014
High sch. grad.	2.5	1.160	2.1	1.030	−.4	−.280	−.4	−.283

Sex								
Male	−1.2	−.710	−1.5	−.900	−2.3*	−1.978	−2.3*	−1.980
Age[c]								
31–40	5.8**	2.430	6.2**	2.777	2.9*	1.818	2.9*	1.813
41–50	7.1**	2.595	8.5**	3.308	1.9	1.038	1.9	1.017
51–60	10.5**	3.869	12.1**	4.716	2.5	1.345	2.5	1.312
61–70	13.4**	4.376	14.7**	5.156	2.1	1.030	2.1	1.013
Over 70	12.2**	3.445	14.6**	4.398	3.3	1.416	3.2	1.384
Region[d]								
South	6.7**	2.464	7.1**	2.772	4.2**	2.391	4.2**	2.416
North—Cent. city	−1.8	−.654	1.0	.388	.7	.370	.6	.330
Interviewer race								
Black			−17.0**	−9.839			.7	.511
Adjusted R^2	.094		.207		.077		.077	
N	687		687		986		986	

NOTES: Data on the feeling thermometer toward whites are based on pooled cases from the NES surveys of 1964, 1976, 1980, 1982, and 1984. Data on the feeling thermometer toward blacks are based on these years plus 1986.

[a] The omitted category is the 1964 NES.

[b] The omitted category is less than completed high school education.

[c] The omitted category is age 18–30.

[d] The omitted category is respondents who resided in the North but outside of a central city of a metropolitan area.

* Coefficient significant at $p = .10$ using a 2-tailed test.

** Coefficient significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

ance that is explained in common by the race-of-interviewer variable and the control variables to the control variables.[10]

Equations 1 and 2 in Table 2 demonstrate that the large differences in feelings toward whites associated with the race of the interviewer shown in Figure 2a persist even when the effects of the control variables are taken into account. The adjusted R^2 increases from .094 with only the control variables in the equation to .207 after the race-of-interviewer variable is included. Net of the effects of the control variables, when blacks are interviewed by other blacks their average temperature on the feeling thermometer toward whites is 17 degrees cooler than it is when blacks are interviewed by whites.

As Table 2 reveals, the race-of-interviewer variable explains more of the variance in warmth of feeling toward whites than the combined effects of the 15 other terms in the equation. The strength of this effect means that the race of the interviewer is not just a minor source of response error; rather, it needs to be taken explicitly into account in any effort to explain the level or change in the level of affect of blacks toward whites.

The analysis makes clear that the absence of race-of-interviewer effects in Figure 2b is not the result of other variables concealing a true difference due to the race of the interviewer. The coefficient for the effect of the race-of-interviewer variable on feeling toward blacks is not statistically significant (Equation 4 of Table 2).

Closeness measures. Table 3 shows the percent of black respondents who stated that they felt close to blacks and to whites. The closeness items asked whether or not the respondent felt that members of the stated group were similar to the respondent in interests, ideas, and feelings (for the question wording, see the note to Table 3). In Table 3, the percent who stated that they felt close to blacks or to whites is shown according to the race of the interviewer, and for all blacks who were interviewed by a white or a black.

Figures 3a and 3b graph this information for reported closeness to whites (Figure 3a) and to blacks (Figure 3b). As in Figures 2a and 2b, the trend in the reported overall percent who feel close to the group is traced by a solid line. Dashed lines trace the percent who feel close to the group separately for black respondents who were interviewed by another black and for black respondents who were interviewed by a white.

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[10] We also examined more complicated models that provided for interaction effects between the race of the interviewer and the control variables—in particular, interactions between race of the interviewer and region. In a few cases, statistically significant interaction effects were found even though the race-of-interviewer variable by itself was not significant. When this occurs, the analysis we present underestimates the effect of the race of the interviewer. In all such cases, however, the increment to the explained variance due to the interaction effects was very small.

Table 3. Percent of Black Respondents Who Feel Close to Blacks and Whites, by Race of Interviewer, 1976, 1980, 1984

Race of Interviewer	1976 Pct.	1976 Base *N*	1980 Pct.	1980 Base *N*	1984 Pct.	1984 Base *N*
	Whites Rated					
Black	10.1	69	11.9	42	8.3	12
White	25.7	105	38.4	112	17.5	80
Signif.	**		**			
Either	19.5	174	31.2	154	16.3	92
	Blacks Rated					
Black	82.6	69	97.6	42	100.0	12
White	75.2	105	83.9	112	71.3	80
Signif.			**		**	
Either	78.2	174	87.7	154	75.0	92

NOTES: The question asked (wording taken from the 1980 survey):
This is a list of some of the groups we talked about earlier in the interview. Please read over the list and tell me the letter for those groups you feel particularly close to—people who are most like you in their ideas and interests and feelings about things.
The format of the question changed somewhat between surveys. At each date, additional groups were listed besides blacks and whites.
Responses coded DK or NA are treated as missing.
** Difference of proportions significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

The results in Figure 3a (closeness to whites) look very similar to the results in Figure 2a (feeling toward whites). In all three surveys, black respondents who were interviewed by a white were much more likely to state that they felt close to whites than blacks who were interviewed by a black. Also, although the proportion of black respondents who reported to white interviewers that they felt close to whites reached a peak in 1980, the proportion of black respondents who reported to black interviewers that they felt close to whites was almost constant over time.

The dotted line in Figure 3a shows what the percent stating they felt close to whites would have been if the responses to white and black interviewers at each survey date were as shown in the dashed lines, but if the proportion of blacks interviewed by black interviewers and by white interviewers at each date were the same as in the 1964 preelection survey. As with the feeling thermometer toward whites, the changing racial composition of the interviewer staff since 1964 appears to

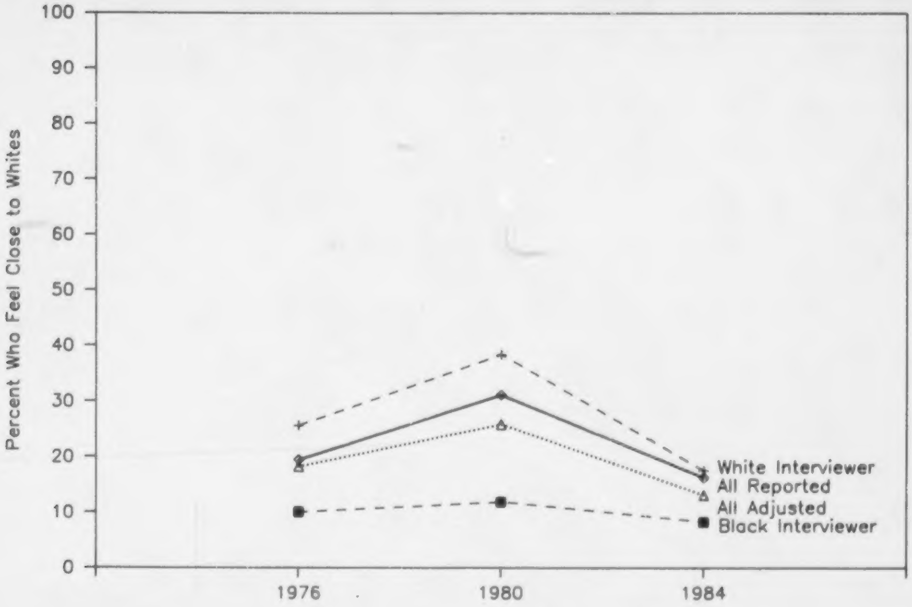

Figure 3a. Percent of Black Respondents Who Feel Close to Whites, as Reported for All Blacks and by Race of Interviewer, and as Adjusted to Reflect Distribution of Interviewers by Race in 1964 Preelection Survey

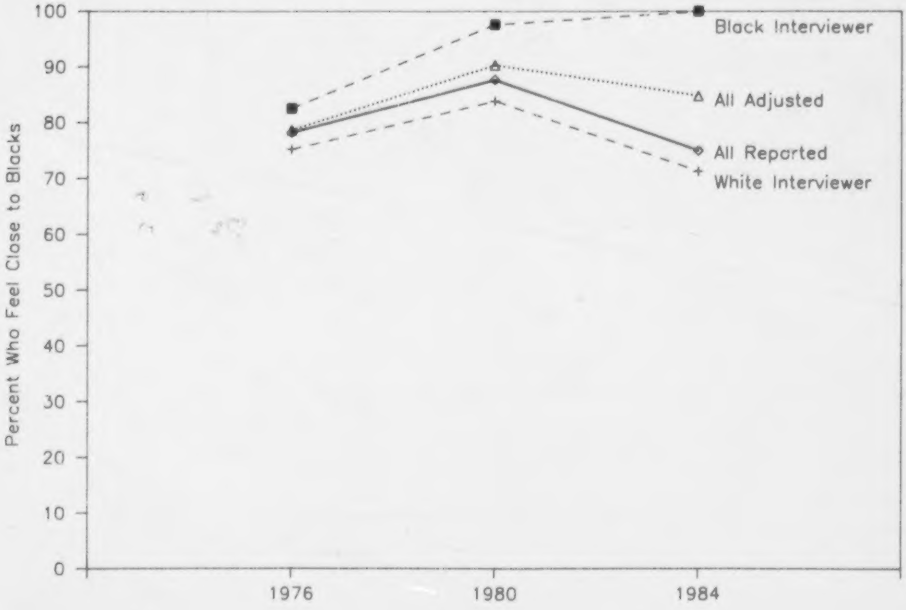

Figure 3b. Percent of Black Respondents Who Feel Close to Blacks, as Reported for All Blacks and by Race of Interviewer, and as Adjusted to Reflect Distribution of Interviewers by Race in 1964 Preelection Survey

have made a difference in the observed attitudes of blacks toward whites.

Figure 3b shows the percent of black respondents who stated they felt close to blacks. The results are also shown separately by race of the interviewer. Unlike the feeling thermometer toward blacks, for which the race of the interviewer had virtually no effect, the measure of closeness to blacks shows a noticeable effect of the race of the interviewer. In all three surveys, blacks interviewed by blacks were more likely to feel close to blacks than were blacks interviewed by whites. The magnitude of this effect increased over time.

The dotted line shows what percent of black respondents would have expressed closeness to other blacks if the racial composition of the interviewer staff in 1984 were the same as in the 1964 survey. Rather than 75% of blacks reporting that they felt close to blacks, 85% would have reported that they felt close to blacks.

The striking difference in the results for the feeling thermometer toward blacks and the question on closeness to blacks underlines the importance of determining whether the effects of the race of the interviewer suggested in Figure 3b are real or are an artifact of small sample size or characteristics of the respondent. Therefore, we again conducted multivariate analyses. However, since the dependent variable is binary, we conducted logit regression analyses in which the dependent variable was coded 1 if the respondent felt close to the given group and 0 if the respondent did not feel close to the given group. We used the same control variables employed in our OLS regression analyses.

Table 4 shows the results of logit regressions for closeness to whites (Equations 1 and 2) and closeness to blacks (Equations 3 and 4). For both dependent variables, the effect of the race of the interviewer is statistically significant. Thus, the race-of-interviewer effects suggested in Figures 3a and 3b do not appear to be an artifact of sample size or respondent characteristics.

Why do the results of the thermometer and closeness measures differ? There is no obvious reason why a strong race-of-interviewer effect would be found on the measure of closeness to blacks, when none was found on the measure of warmth of feelings toward blacks. It is difficult to believe that the affective content of the two kinds of questions differs enough to account for the different susceptibility of the questions to race-of-interviewer effects.

Examination of the format of the questions suggests an explanation. For the thermometer items, respondents were asked about each group in turn without knowing in advance the complete list of groups. For the closeness questions, respondents were shown a card that listed all the groups for whom closeness was to be ascertained. Since "whites" was one of the listed groups, some black respondents could have felt that

Table 4. Logit Regressions of Feeling of Closeness Toward Whites and Blacks on Characteristics of Black Respondents and Race of the Interviewer

Dummy Independent Variable	Dependent Variable							
	Feel Close to Whites (1 = Close, 0 = Not Close)				Feel Close to Blacks (1 = Close, 0 = Not Close)			
	Equation 1		Equation 2		Equation 3		Equation 4	
	b	*t*-ratio	*b*	*t*-ratio	*b*	*t*-ratio	*b*	*t*-ratio
Constant	−2.400**	4.202	−2.084**	3.640	1.016*	1.946	.767	1.460
Survey[a]								
1980 NES	.720**	2.644	.556**	1.990	.534*	1.677	.692*	2.135
1984 NES	−.064	−.180	−.404	−1.113	−.352	−1.091	−.105	−.316
Education[b]								
College graduate	−.181	−.322	−.208	−.363	.732	1.069	.789	1.148
Some college	−.170	−.439	−.144	−.364	.510	1.190	.463	1.073
High sch. grad.	−.081	−.257	−.005	−.015	.340	.962	.295	.830
Sex								
Male	.191	.773	.171	.673	.230	.827	.259	.921
Age[c]								
31–40	−.378	−.952	−.338	−.861	.020	.049	−.005	−.012
41–50	.208	.518	.292	.704	.487	.934	.413	.785
51–60	.230	.614	.364	.942	−.128	−.301	−.218	−.510
61–70	−.163	−.368	−.041	−.089	−.217	−.472	−.367	−.784
Over 70	.303	.667	.618	1.306	−.442	−.948	−.673	−1.404

Region[d]								
South	1.106**	2.328	1.057**	2.202	.000	.001	.018	.044
North—Cent. city	.844*	1.758	.987**	2.083	.316	.730	.206	.470
Interviewer race								
Black			−1.389**	−4.106			1.054**	3.025
Comparison with constant								
chi-square	21.36		41.45		19.68		30.07	
df	13		14		13		14	
p	.06		<.001		.105		.009	
Comparison with base model								
chi-square			20.09				10.39	
df			1				1	
p			<.001				.002	
Pseudo-R^2	.049[e]		.091		.045		.067	
N	416		416		416		416	

NOTE: The data are pooled from the 1976, 1980, and 1984 NES surveys.

[a] The omitted category in all equations is the 1976 NES.

[b] The omitted category is less than completed high school education.

[c] The omitted category is age 18–30.

[d] The omitted category is respondents who resided in the north but outside of a central city of a metropolitan area.

[e] The pseudo-R^2 is the one proposed by Aldrich and Nelson (1984).

* Difference of means significant at $p = .10$ using a 2-tailed test.

** Difference of means significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

stating that they felt close to blacks but not close to whites would have been offensive to a white interviewer. These respondents had two choices of answers that would not offend a white interviewer: they could state that they felt close to *neither* whites nor blacks, or they could state that they felt close to *both* whites and blacks.[11] The "offensive" response would be that they felt close to blacks but not close to whites.

That the format of the question, in combination with the race of the interviewer, influenced the pattern of responses is supported by the results shown in Figures 4a and 4b.[12] These figures show the distribution of responses in four categories: felt close to neither blacks nor whites; felt close to whites but not blacks; felt close to blacks but not whites; and felt close to both blacks and whites.

The most noticeable difference between Figure 4a and Figure 4b is the difference in the percent who stated that they felt close to blacks but not close to whites. The shift from 78.9% of black respondents stating that they were close only to blacks when the interviewer was black (Figure 4b) to 49.5% when the interviewer was white (Figure 4a) was due to a shift both into the category "close to *neither* blacks nor whites" and into the category "close to *both* blacks and whites": 22.2% of those who were interviewed by a white stated that they felt close to neither whites nor blacks, whereas 10.6% of those who were interviewed by another black stated that they felt close to neither whites nor blacks; 27.9% of those who were interviewed by a white stated that they felt close to both blacks and whites, whereas 10.6% of those who were interviewed by another black stated that they felt close to both blacks and whites. Thus, it appears that black respondents were about equally likely to try to avoid offending a white interviewer by stating that they felt close to *neither* blacks nor whites as by stating that they felt close to *both* blacks and whites.

In summary, it appears that the format of the closeness items contained an implied comparison of attitudes toward whites and other groups, even though such a comparison was not explicitly suggested.[13] As a result, the politeness-to-a-stranger explanation could account for

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[11] It also would not have been offensive to a white interviewer for a black respondent to state that he or she felt close to whites but not close to blacks. Only one out of the 425 black respondents chose that pattern of responses. Respondents also had another possible response: refusal to answer the question, or stating that they "don't know." Only 5 of the 425 blacks in the pooled data set were scored as "missing" on the closeness measures.

[12] These figures are based on the pooled responses from the 1976, 1980, and 1984 postelection surveys.

[13] An explicit comparison question was asked after the respondent stated whether he or she felt close to each of the listed groups: "Look at the list again. Of the groups you just mentioned, which one do you feel closest to?"

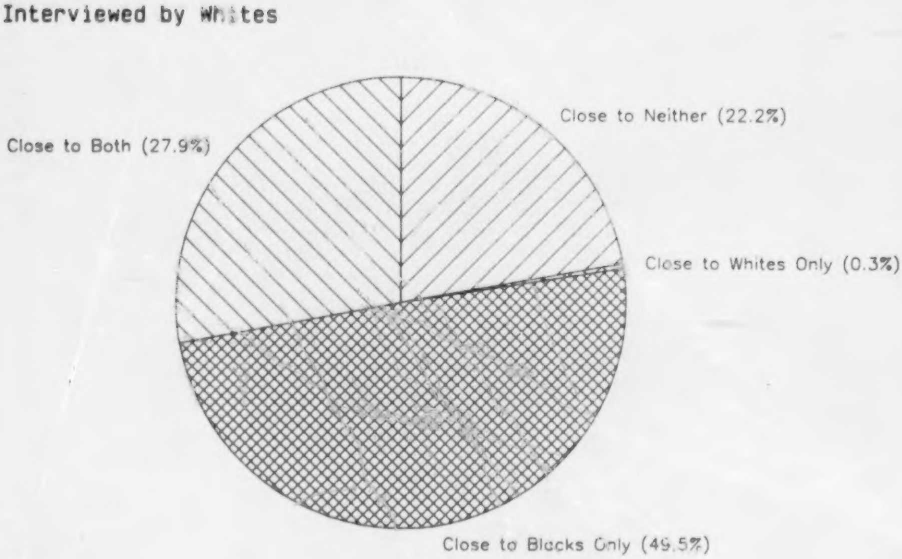

Figure 4a. Percent of Black Respondents Interviewed by Whites Who Feel Close to Neither Whites nor Blacks, Only Whites, Only Blacks, or Both Whites and Blacks

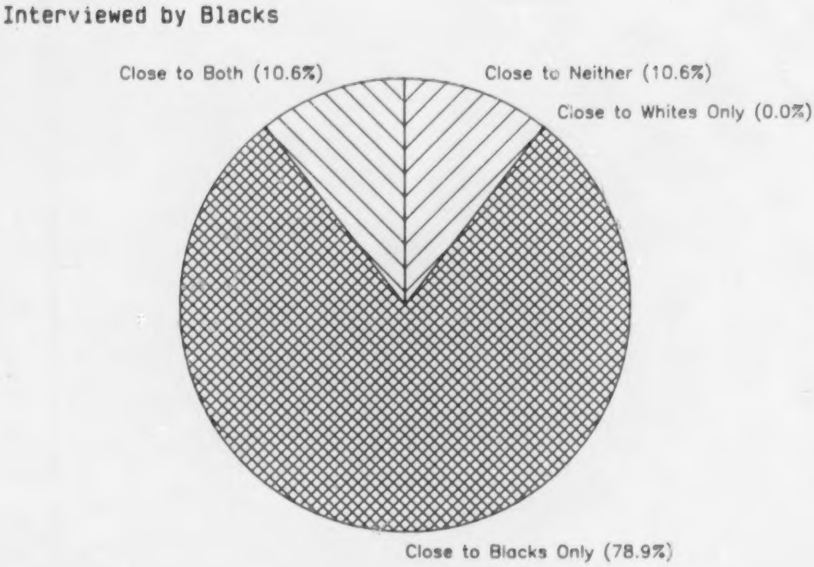

Figure 4b. Percent of Black Respondents Interviewed by Blacks Who Feel Close to Neither Whites nor Blacks, Only Whites, Only Blacks, or Both Whites and Blacks

the race-of-interviewer effect on expressed closeness to blacks, even though no such effect was found on expressed feelings of warmth toward blacks.

Although the format of the closeness items may be more economical than that of the thermometer items, it introduces a response effect of the race of the interviewer. Moreover, as shown in Figure 3b, because of the changing racial composition of the SRC interviewer staff, black respondents appeared overall to become less close to blacks between 1976 and 1984; however, had this composition not changed or had all black respondents been interviewed by a black in each survey, the observed closeness to blacks would have *increased* over time.

POLICY ISSUES

Pushing too slowly. Table 5 shows the percent of black respondents who stated that civil rights leaders have been pushing "too slowly," in response to a question whether civil rights leaders have been pushing too fast, too slowly, or at about the right speed (for the wording, see the note to Table 5). The results are also graphed in Figure 5.

At every date, black respondents were much more likely to tell a black interviewer than a white interviewer that civil rights leaders were pushing too slowly. A logit regression analysis, shown in Table 6, indicates that the effect of the race of the interviewer is not an artifact of respondent characteristics. Over the two decades, militancy on this item increased among both blacks interviewed by whites and blacks interviewed by blacks. But our synthetic calculations suggest that overall levels of black militancy increased more than the observed results suggest. Blacks would have expressed more militant attitudes if the proportion of blacks interviewed by blacks had not declined substantially during the past two decades

Busing. Table 7 shows the responses to another policy question, whether the respondent favored busing to achieve racial integration. The responses were reported on a seven-point scale ranging from favoring busing to achieve integration (coded 1) to favoring keeping neighborhood schools (coded 7). The differences according to the race of the interviewer are small and inconsistent across surveys.

It is possible that the busing issue differs in content according to the locale, so that this item is interpreted differently in different settings. Moreover, a multiple regression analysis (not shown here) suggests that within the black population, attitudes toward busing are not consistently related to education, age, sex, or region; these factors together account for less than 1% of the variance in support for busing. This regression analysis confirms that not all race-related policy issues are affected by the race of the interviewer.

Table 5. Percent of Black Respondents Who Say That Civil Rights People Have Been Pushing Too Slowly, by Race of Interviewer, 1964, 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1986

Race of Interviewer	1964		1976		1980		1984		1986	
	Pct.	Base *N*	Pct.	Base *N*	Pct.	Base *N*	Pct.	Base *N*	Pct.	Base *N*
Black	31.5	73	47.3	91	63.4	41	66.7	12	54.3	35
White	17.7	79	30.6	121	35.6	104	49.3	75	43.9	114
Signif.	**		**		**					
Either	24.3	152	37.7	212	43.4	145	51.7	87	46.3	149

NOTES: The question asked:

Some say that the civil rights people have been trying to push too fast. Others feel they haven't pushed fast enough. How about you: Do you think that civil rights leaders are trying to push too fast, are going too slowly, or are they moving about the right speed?

Responses coded as DK or NA are treated as missing.

** Difference of proportions significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

Table 6. Logit Regression of Whether Civil Rights Leaders Have Been Pushing Too Slowly, on Characteristics of Black Respondents and Race of Interviewer

Dummy Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Pushing Too Slowly (1 = Yes, 0 = No)			
	Equation 1		Equation 2	
	b	*t*-ratio	*b*	*t*-ratio
Constant	−1.394**	−4.069	−1.773**	−4.895
Survey[a]				
1976 NES	.590**	2.389	.647**	2.574
1980 NES	.745**	2.856	.937**	3.474
1984 NES	1.054**	3.467	1.356**	4.263
1986 NES	.789**	2.976	1.004**	3.655
Education[b]				
College graduate	.866**	2.659	.944**	2.854
Some college	.662**	2.686	.680**	2.712
High sch. grad.	.292	1.385	.257	1.200
Sex				
Male	.429**	2.636	.434**	2.624
Age[c]				
31–40	.158	.706	.138	.605
41–50	.261	1.007	.206	.783
51–60	−.223	−.842	−.304	−1.129
61–70	−.147	−.474	−.217	−.688
Over 70	−.041	−.122	−.158	−.467
Region[d]				
South	−.302	−1.226	−.256	−1.014
North—Central city	.121	.496	.079	.317
Interviewer race				
Black			.807**	4.542
Comparison with constant				
chi-square	63.8		84.8	
df	15		16	
p	<.001		<.001	
Comparison with base model				
chi-square			21.0	
df			1	
p			<.001	
Pseudo-R^2	.080		.103	
N	735		735	

NOTE: The data are pooled from the 1964, 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1986 NES surveys.

[a] The omitted category is the 1964 NES.

[b] The omitted category is less than completed high school education.

[c] The omitted category is age 18–30.

[d] The omitted category is respondents who resided in the north but outside of a central city of a metropolitan area.

** Coefficient significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

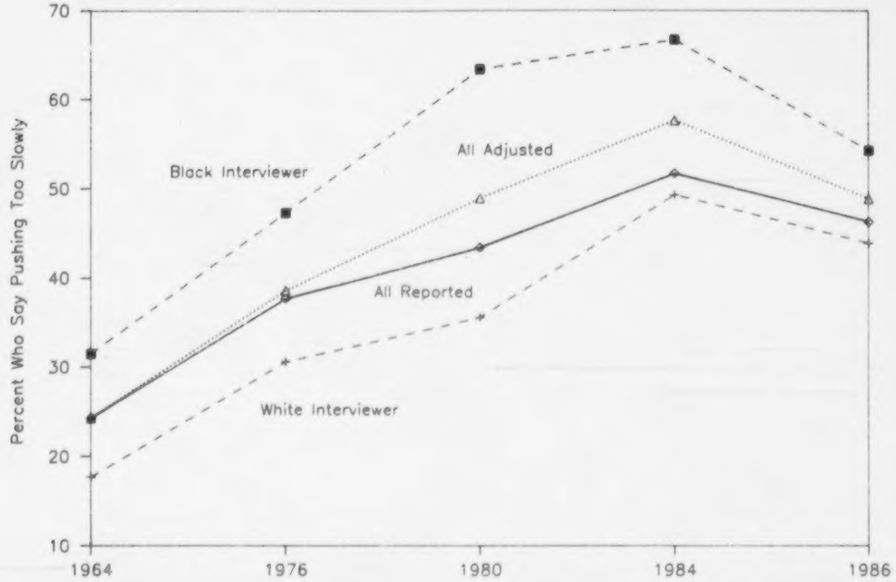

Figure 5. Percent of Black Respondents Who Say Civil Rights Leaders Have Been Pushing Too Slowly, as Reported for All Blacks and by Race of Interviewer, and as Adjusted to Reflect Distribution of Interviewers by Race in 1964

Table 7. Mean Score of Black Respondents on Question About the Use of Busing to Achieve Racial Integration, by Race of Interviewer, 1976, 1980, and 1984

Race of Interviewer	1976 Mean	1976 Base *N*	1980 Mean	1980 Base *N*	1984 Mean	1984 Base *N*
Black	3.90	80	3.47	36	5.11	9
White	3.80	110	4.30	97	4.71	65
Signif.			*			
Either	3.84	190	4.08	133	4.76	74

NOTES: The question asked:
There is much discussion about the best way to deal with racial problems. Some people think achieving racial integration of schools is so important that it justifies busing children to schools out of their own neighborhoods. Others think letting children go to their neighborhood schools is so important that they oppose busing. Where would you place yourself on this [7-point] scale or haven't you thought much about this? [1 = Bus to achieve integration, 7 = Keep neighborhood schools]
Responses coded as DK, NA, or "Haven't Thought Much" are treated as missing.
* Difference of means significant at $p = .10$ using a 2-tailed test.

Aid to minorities. Table 8 shows the mean responses to a question about whether members of minority groups should receive aid from the government or whether the minorities should help themselves. This, too, is in the form of a seven-point scale (see the note to Table 8). As in the case of the answers to the question on busing, the differences in the mean score by race of the interviewer are small and inconsistent across surveys. A regression analysis (not shown) confirms that the race of the interviewer is not a significant factor in the responses to the aid-to-minorities question.

Spending on blacks, welfare, and food stamps. Table 9 shows the responses to questions about whether the government should increase spending on blacks, welfare, and food stamps. For all of these items, black respondents were much more likely to favor increased spending if interviewed by a black than if interviewed by a white. Logit regression analyses (not shown) indicate a significant race-of-interviewer effect for spending on blacks and on food stamps, with those black respondents who were interviewed by another black being more likely to support increased spending. Although the coefficient for the race-of-interviewer variable was not significant in the logit regression for increased spending on welfare, this could be because the spending on welfare question was only asked in one survey and the sample size was small.

The results for the spending-on-blacks item are interesting because they contrast with the result for government aid to minorities. For spending on blacks, there are clear race-of-interviewer effects; for aid to minorities, there are none. Part of the explanation could be that the spending item refers expressly to blacks, whereas the aid-to-minorities item does not. But this is certainly not the entire explanation, because the responses to the spending-on-welfare and spending-on-food-stamps items, which do not refer expressly to blacks, show significant race-of-interviewer effects.

In sum, the results of our tests for race-of-interviewer effects on the policy items are mixed. For some items (militancy about civil rights, spending on blacks), the race of the interviewer is associated with large differences in the responses and accounts for more of the variance than do differences in respondent characteristics. But for other items (school busing, government aid to minorities) the race of the interviewer has no significant bearing on the responses.

Implications

The race-of-interviewer effects on the feeling thermometer and closeness measures toward whites seem to fit Schuman and Converse's

Table 8. Mean Score on Government Aid to Minorities Scale for Black Respondents, by Race of Interviewer, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, and 1986

Race of Inter-	1976		1978		1980		1982		1984		1986	
viewer	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*
Black	2.53	78	2.32	60	2.80	35	2.38	32	2.58	26	3.35	31
White	2.38	111	2.87	126	3.32	88	2.99	86	2.89	148	3.21	103
Signif.			*									
Either	2.44	189	2.69	186	3.17	123	2.82	118	2.84	174	3.25	134

NOTES: The question asked:

Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks and other minority groups. Suppose those people are at one end of the scale at point number 1. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves. Suppose these people are at the other end at point 7. And of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale or haven't you thought much about this?

Responses coded as DK, NA, or "Haven't Thought Much" are treated as missing.

* Difference of means significant at $p = .10$ using a 2-tailed test.

Table 9. Percent of Black Respondents Who Would Like Increased Government Spending on Various Programs and Groups, by Race of Interviewer, 1982 and 1986

Race of Interviewer	1982		1986	
	Pct.	Base *N*	Pct.	Base *N*
	Prefer Increased Spending on Blacks			
Black	91.4	35	90.7	75
White	77.1	96	69.4	222
Signif.	*		**	
Either	80.9	131	74.7	297
	Prefer Increased Spending on Welfare			
Black	62.9	35		
White	51.0	102		
Signif.				
Either	54.0	137		
	Prefer Increased Spending on Food Stamps			
Black	67.7	31	70.0	70
White	45.4	97	48.6	212
Signif.	**		**	
Either	50.8	128	53.9	282

NOTES: The wording of the question differed between 1982 and 1986. In 1982, it was:

> This country is faced with many problems, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think the federal government is spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. . . .

In 1986, the wording was:

> If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, for which of the following programs would you like to see spending increased and for which would you like to see spending decreased—
>
> Should federal government spending on ——— be *increased, decreased,* or *kept about the same?*

We treat the "too little" in 1982 as equivalent to "increased" in 1986, "about the right amount" as equivalent to "kept about the same," and "too much" as equivalent to "decreased."

Responses coded DK or NA are treated as missing.

* Difference of proportions significant at $p = .10$ using a 2-tailed test.

** Difference of proportions significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

(1971) view of the interview situation in which black respondents modify their answers to avoid offending a white interviewer. The race of the interviewer comes into play in situations in which there are unambiguous references to race and a perceived threat to the maintenance of a polite conversation between the respondent and the interviewer. This by itself, however, cannot explain why the race of the interviewer affects responses to questions about closeness to blacks but does not affect the feeling thermometer toward blacks. We think that the format of the "closeness" items implied a comparison between attitudes toward whites and attitudes toward other groups even though such a comparison was not explicitly indicated in the question.

The sources of the differences in the race-of-interviewer effects among the policy items are not obvious. In general, it appears that for items for which the respondent characteristics accounted for little variance, the race of the interviewer failed to account for a significant amount of variance; while for items for which the respondent characteristics accounted for a moderate amount of the variance, the race of the interviewer accounted for a significant amount of the variance. This means that the race of the interviewer does not serve as a compensatory cue in situations when respondents have no other compelling reason (based on their socioeconomic status, for example) to prefer one policy position to another. At the same time, however, we think it is unlikely that for the attitudes in which the race-of-interviewer variable matters, the race of the interviewer is actually capturing variance that could have been accounted for by a different set of respondent characteristics. Therefore, we do not think that the race-of-interviewer effects are spurious.

The major lesson from this analysis is that there is no simple and obvious rule that would allow the survey analyst to predict whether there are likely to be race-of-interviewer effects on the answers to a given question. On the one hand, this means that the conventional wisdom about the assignment of interviewers by race is neither right nor wrong for all purposes. On the other hand, this means that researchers need to be especially careful to assure that interviewer characteristics are not distorting either the aggregate responses on individual items or the relations between variables. On the latter point, Anderson, Silver, and Abramson (1988) showed that the race-of-interviewer effects on civic attitudes and voting turnout led to an exaggeration of the correlation between civic attitudes and turnout. Based on our analysis here, we think that the race-of-interviewer effects on measures of group consciousness (using feeling thermometer and closeness-to-groups items) are also likely to exaggerate the correlation between group consciousness and political participation.

For these reasons, it is important that information about the race of the interviewer be included in the publicly distributed data from NES surveys. The inclusion of this information in the 1986 NES data file is a welcome event. The release of interviewer data for earlier NES surveys would also be valuable, as would their release in other widely used surveys produced by the SRC, NORC, and other survey organizations.

This information is important for several kinds of study designs. First, for studies in which researchers are concerned with tracking trends over time in race-related attitudes, information about the race of the interviewers could be critical if the racial composition of the interviewer staff changes substantially over time. Second, even for surveys in which researchers are not concerned with trends over time, analysts need to be more alert to how the racial composition of the interviewer staff can affect response variation, both on race-related items and on other items.

Third, for studies that test alternative versions of questions, such as in a split-half design, analysts need to consider that differences in the results obtained with alternative question wordings could be partly a consequence of the race of the interviewers. A good illustration of such an effect can be found in the 1986 NES survey. The seven-point scale item on aid to minorities that had appeared in several previous NES surveys was administered to half of the respondents in 1986; the other half were asked a question that was identical to the aid-to-minorities question except that in place of the word "minorities" was the word "blacks." Table 10 compares the results for the two questions.

Although the number of cases involved in the split-half test is very small, Table 10 is instructive about why it is important to test for race-of-interviewer effects. A researcher who did not consider the race of the interviewer at all might conclude from row C of Table 10 that blacks are more supportive of "self-help" when they are asked about government aid to blacks than when they are asked about government aid to minorities.[14] If the measurement of the attitudes were not affected by the race of the interviewer or by other sources of systematic error, the results could have important implications for our understanding of the attitudes of blacks toward federal aid programs. In fact, however, the results in row C are an artifact of the racial composition of the interviewer staff: blacks who were interviewed by a black (row A) were more in favor of government aid to blacks than they were of government aid to minorities, whereas blacks who were interviewed by a white were more in favor of government aid to minorities than they were of government aid to blacks (row B).

Therefore, the overall results in row C are a consequence of the fact

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[14] However, this difference is not statistically significant.

Table 10. Mean Level of Support for Government Aid to Minorities and Government Aid to Blacks, for Black Respondents in the 1986 National Election Study

Race of Interviewer	Aid to Minorities		Aid to Blacks		
	Mean	Base *N*	Mean	Base *N*	Significance
A. Black	3.35	31	2.90	39	
B. White	3.21	103	3.79	100	**
Significance			**		
C. Either	3.25	134	3.54	139	

NOTES: The wording of the aid-to-minorities question is given in the note to Table 8. The aid-to-blacks question is identical, except that the word "blacks" is substituted for the word "minorities." 1 = Government aid, 7 = Minorities/blacks help themselves.

** Difference of means significant at $p = .05$ using a 2-tailed test.

that a majority of black respondents were interviewed by a white. Had the conventional wisdom about the assignment of interviewers by race been followed in the 1986 NES survey—i.e., had all black respondents been interviewed by blacks—the direction of the difference in the mean response to the two versions of the questions would have been reversed. Underlying this reversal is the large race-of-interviewer effect on the responses to the aid-to-blacks item, in contrast to the negligible race-of-interviewer effect on the aid-to-minorities item. Also, the effect runs in opposite directions on the two items.

Although the aid-to-blacks question might seem to be more attractive than the aid-to-minorities question for gauging attitudes on race-related policies, it appears to be more susceptible to the effects of the race of the interviewer. Thus, attention to the racial composition of the interviewer staff could be critical both to assessing the utility of alternative versions of a question and to the substantive conclusions one draws about trends in race-related attitudes.

Appendix

Table A1. List of NES Surveys in Which Items Used in the Analysis Appeared

	1964		1976		1978	1980		1982	1984		1986
Survey Item	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Post	Pre	Post	Post	Pre	Post	Post
Therm. blacks	X			X			X	X		X	X
Therm. whites	X			X			X	X		X	
Close to blacks				X			X			X	
Close to whites				X			X			X	
Civil rights leaders pushing too fast	X		X			X				X	X
Aid to minorities			X		X		X	X	X		X
School busing			X				X			X	
Spending—blacks								X			X
Spending—welfare								X			
Spending—food stamps								X			X

NOTE: The 1978, 1982, and 1986 NES surveys consisted only of postelection interviews.

Table A2. Distribution of Interviews of Black Respondents in Pre- and Postelection Surveys, by Race of Interviewer, in SRC/CPS National Election Studies of 1964, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, and 1986

Race of:		1964[a]		1976[b]		1978	1980		1982	1984[c]		1986
Resp.	Interv.	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Post	Pre	Post	Post	Pre	Post	Post
N of Cases												
Black	Black	75	55	93	69	80	50	42	37	35	12	76
Black	White	84	73	134	107	152	123	113	111	200	82	229
N of Interviewers												
Black	Black	15	14	16	14	18	8	7	6	5	4	12
Black	White	33	30	48	43	53	46	44	42	41	29	53

NOTE: Cases for which data are missing, or in which respondent or interviewer is not white or black, are excluded.

[a] The data for 1964 exclude cases in the "Negro Supplement."

[b] Although a weighting factor is usually employed with the 1976 survey, we use the unweighted results.

[c] The postelection data for 1984 exclude cases in which the interviews were conducted by telephone.

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LEE SIGELMAN AND
STANLEY PRESSER

Abstract It has been reported that 30% of American adults support the "sociomoral platform of the Moral Majority" (Simpson, 1983). We lodge several criticisms of this estimate and/or the way it has subsequently been interpreted, involving the treatment of "don't know" responses, the selection of response category cutting points, the passage of time, the effects of question wording, and substance. We derive a much different estimate of public support for the Moral Majority platform in the same year, but our more basic conclusion is simply that public opinion on this issue, as on most complex issues, cannot be fairly reflected by a single number.

The rise of the "New Christian Right" is one of the most striking political developments of the past decade. Social scientists have explored many of the issues posed by this movement, ranging from its sources to its impact (Liebman and Wuthnow, 1983). Among the most provocative of these issues is the movement's size. To some analysts, estimating the level of public support for the religious right is the bedrock on which discussion of the movement must rest.

Attempts to estimate the popularity of the New Christian Right have relied on sample surveys of the general public (see, e.g., Buell and Sigelman, 1985; Day-Lower, 1983; Gallup, 1981, 1982; Shupe and Stacey, 1983; Wilcox, 1987; Yankelovich, 1981). Each analysis has produced a point estimate of the proportion of American adults who identify with, agree with, or support the religious right. But these estimates vary widely.

Some of these differences are, in principle, reconcilable. For example, some of the surveys were conducted at different times and sampled different populations. But it is naive to assume that all the

LEE SIGELMAN is Professor of Political Science and Communication, and Dean of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Arizona. STANLEY PRESSER is Director of the Sociology Program at the National Science Foundation.

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various results could be reconciled to produce one "best" estimate (see Moore and Whitt, 1986). Indeed, the search for a single number representing support for the New Christian Right is like that for the Holy Grail.

A basic canon of survey research is that alternative measurement procedures (e.g., question wording differences or differing survey contexts) can produce very different results (Turner and Martin, 1984). Because no measurement method can be shown to be superior to all others, there may be no "true" value for public opinion on an issue.

Although this is an old lesson, it bears repeating because it is remarkably easy to forget. In this paper we make the case anew, in the context of one of the most sophisticated efforts to date, Simpson's (1983) study of public support for the New Christian Right. More specifically, we focus on one of three questions that Simpson addresses in his chapter: "First, how should support for the sociomoral platform of the Moral Majority be measured and, given a measurement method, what proportion of the American population is positively oriented toward the platform?" (p. 187). The recent downfall of televangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker and other highly publicized incidents involving conservative Christian leaders have, according to recent media polls, undermined public support for the religious right. Moreover, support for the Moral Majority per se may no longer be of pressing interest, especially since that organization has recently been reconstituted as part of the umbrella Liberty Foundation. Still, at the time Simpson undertook his analysis, "Moral Majority" served as a code phrase or shorthand for the New Religious Right, as it continues to do today. It is in that context that it seems worthwhile to demonstrate that support for the Moral Majority platform cannot be represented by any single number.

Simpson's Estimate of Support for the Moral Majority Platform

How many Americans agree with the political ideas articulated by the New Christian Right, regardless of whether they identify with the Moral Majority, endorse Pat Robertson's presidential candidacy, or belong to any religious or political organization? Simpson (1983) interpreted acceptance of the "Moral Majority platform," which incorporates key elements of the broader New Christian Right's social and political agenda, as a measure of agreement with the New Christian Right, and we follow that precedent here. According to Simpson, the Moral Majority platform is accepted *in its entirety* by 30% of the American public. Simpson went on to characterize another 42% of the public as ideological "fellow travelers" of the Moral Majority. He also undertook an analysis of the correlates of acceptance of the Moral Majority platform. However, we focus exclusively on his estimate that 30% of the American public agrees with the entire Moral Majority platform—an estimate often cited to establish the potential political clout of the New Christian Right.

Simpson arrived at this 30% estimate by selecting from the 1977 NORC General Social Survey (GSS) four items concerning women's role in society (FEFAM), abortion (ABANY), homosexuality (HOMOSEX), and school prayer (PRAYER), and categorizing responses to each item as either consistent or inconsistent with "the sociomoral platform of the Moral Majority" (see Table 1).[1] Dichotomizing the four items yielded sixteen different response patterns, by far the most common of which proved to be the combination of the four pro–Moral Majority platform answers. Some 30% of the 1977 GSS respondents said that women should take care of the home and family while men work outside the home, that women should not be able to obtain a legal abortion for any reason, that homosexuality is always wrong, and that mandatory religious exercises should be permitted in the public schools. This was more than three times the number in any other category and approximately five times the number who opposed the Moral Majority position on all four issues.

Our qualms about this estimate stem from a wide range of considerations, ranging from relatively narrow, technical aspects of the estimation process to broader, more conceptual issues. We begin with the least significant of these concerns and build toward the most significant.

THE TREATMENT OF "DON'T KNOWS"

In any survey, some respondents take no position on an issue. How these "don't knows" should be handled depends on the purpose of the analysis. Simpson's purpose was to estimate support for the Moral Majority platform in the American public, not support for the Moral Majority platform in that segment of the American public that holds opinions on all four relevant issues. Therefore it would have been appropriate to interpret "don't know" responses as indications of *non*-support for (though not necessarily opposition to) the Moral Majority platform; the percentage of the public endorsing the Moral Majority platform would then be the number agreeing with the Moral Major-

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[1] The variable labels are those used in the GSS codebooks. We employ them here to provide a ready reference for readers. We obtained the GSS datasets through the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research; neither the consortium nor the collectors of the data are responsible for our analyses and interpretations.

Table 1. Responses to Simpson's "Moral Majority Platform" Items, 1977

"Please tell me whether or not *you* think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a *legal* abortion if the woman wants it for any reason." (ABANY)

Yes	36.6%
No[a]	60.5
Don't know	2.9

"What about sexual relations between two *adults* the same sex—do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?" (HOMOSEX)

Always wrong[a]	68.6%
Almost always wrong	5.5
Wrong only sometimes	7.2
Not wrong at all	14.2
Don't know	4.5

"It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." (FEFAM)

Strongly agree[a]	18.0%
Agree[a]	46.8
Disagree	27.7
Strongly disagree	6.0
Don't know	1.5

"The United States Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government may *require* the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. What are your views on this—do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling?" (PRAYER)

Approve	33.5%
Disapprove[a]	64.2
No opinion	2.3

NOTE: Parenthesized variable names are the identifiers in the GSS codebook and data set.

[a] A response classified as supportive of the Moral Majority platform.

ity position on all four items, expressed as a percentage of all respondents who answered the items. However, Simpson dropped from the analysis respondents who gave a "don't know" response to any question. As it happens, opinionation on the four items ran high: only 142 respondents answered "don't know" to any of these items. Therefore, the questionable treatment of "don't knows" could not have more than a minor effect on Simpson's estimate. Even so, it is incorrect to say that 30% of the GSS respondents supported the Moral Majority platform. One *could* say either (a) that 30% of those who held opinions on these issues (i.e., the 411 who shared the Moral Majority positions, expressed as a percentage of the 1,370 who offered opinions about all four issues) shared the Moral Majority view, or (b) that 27% of the GSS respondents (411 as a percentage of the 1,512 for whom answers were recorded on all four questions) shared the Moral Majority view. Again, an adjustment of three percentage points is hardly fundamental. As a general rule, though, when the intent is to describe the overall distribution of opinions, one should be certain to include all respondents in the estimate.[2]

CUTTING POINTS

As we have indicated, Simpson categorized responses to each question as either consistent or inconsistent with the Moral Majority's position. The agree–disagree and yes–no formats of the PRAYER and ABANY items preordained the cutting points on these two items, but the HOMOSEX and FEFAM items offered four response categories apiece: homosexuality could be "always wrong," "almost always wrong," "wrong only sometimes," or "not wrong at all," and respondents could strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree that the proper role of women is to care for home and family. Because the Moral Majority categorically opposes homosexuality, Simpson dichotomized the HOMOSEX item between the first and second responses. On the other hand, while the Moral Majority espouses an extremely traditionalistic view of women's role, Simpson chose to cut the FEFAM item between the second and third responses. As Table 1 reveals, his handling of this item had a major bearing on the percentage of respondents ultimately classified as fully supportive of the Moral Majority platform. In fact, had he split the item between the first and second responses to that single item, then instead of 27% of the 1977 GSS respondents, only 9% could have been considered fully supportive of the Moral Majority platform. Whether the cutting point Simpson did not use better captures the Moral Majority position than the one he did use is a debatable issue. We think it does, but the real point is that a point estimate like 27% (or, for that matter, 9%) is a function, among other things, of the manner in which a researcher treats the response categories on the items in question. Since there is no single "correct" way to define cutting points, it follows that there is no single "correct" point estimate.

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[2] Interviewers sometimes neglect to ask a question or to record an answer. These instances, designated as "no answers," are excluded from the present analysis. Thus the percentages in the text and tables are for all respondents for whom answers were recorded rather than for all respondents. For 1977, this means that 18 GSS respondents were omitted when Simpson's four-item categorization was employed.

POINT-IN-TIME ESTIMATES

A third problem with the 30% estimate is that it was based on data that are now a decade old, even though it is still cited as though it were current. Of course, this is more of a problem of others continuing to rely on Simpson's result after it was published than of the original result itself. If attitudes on the issues in question were unchanging, the time lag would pose no problem. However, there is some evidence that social attitudes in this country have been changing (Smith, 1982; but see also Davis, 1980). In this light, it seems possible that the 30% estimate was outdated by the time it reached print; any liberalization of traditional social attitudes after 1977 would have made pro–Moral Majority platform attitudes less widespread than they were in 1977.

Since only two of the items appeared in the GSS in both 1977 (the year of the survey on which Simpson relied) and 1983 (the year his analysis was published), we cannot determine precisely how much bias the reliance on 1977 data introduced. We do know that there was little change in the 1977 and 1983 opinion distributions on one of the four items: responding to the ABANY question, 61% of the GSS respondents agreed with the Moral Majority position in 1977 and 64% did so in 1983 (see Table 2). If anything, then, use of 1977 data on attitudes toward abortion may have slightly *under*stated public endorsement of the Moral Majority's position in the early 1980s. However, a more substantial change is evident on the PRAYER item, where agreement with the Moral Majority's position declined from 64% in 1977 to 57% in 1983, a 7-percentage-point movement away from the Moral Majority position.

The HOMOSEX item was not repeated in 1983, and the 1977 and 1983 GSS data sets contain no other appropriate item on homosexuality. Nor was the FEFAM item repeated, but in both 1977 and 1983 two very closely related questions on women's familial role were asked. On both of these there were large-scale changes between 1977 and 1983. On FEHOME, the percentage of respondents agreeing with the Moral Majority position declined 15 points, from 37% to 22%, while on FEWORK the percentage dropped 10 points, from 33% to 23%. Thus, if these two items are any indication (and on their face they seem no less valid as indicators of support for the Moral Majority platform than the FEFAM item that Simpson employed), some 30% to 40% of the 1977 support for

Table 2. 1977–83 Comparison of Responses to Two "Moral Majority Platform" Items and Two Related Items

"Please tell me whether or not *you* think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a *legal* abortion if the woman wants it for any reason." (ABANY)

	1977	*1983*
Yes	36.6%	33.2%
No	60.5	63.6
Don't know	2.9	3.2

"The United States Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government may *require* the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. What are your views on this—do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling?" (PRAYER)

	1977	*1983*
Approve	33.5%	39.6%
Disapprove	64.2	56.7
No opinion	2.3	3.8

"Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men." (FEHOME)

	1977	*1983*
Agree	37.2%	22.4%
Disagree	60.3	74.2
Not sure	2.5	3.5

"Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?" (FEWORK)

	1977	*1983*
Approve	65.4%	75.0%
Disapprove	33.2	22.9
Don't know	1.4	2.0

the Moral Majority's position on the role of women in the family fell away by 1983.

A different cut at the question of contemporaneity is shown in Table 3, which summarizes the responses to the four Simpson questions in the 1985 GSS. As compared to the 1977 responses, in 1985 agreement with the Moral Majority position on abortion held almost exactly at the same level, and agreement that homosexuality is always wrong increased slightly. But on the other two items (and especially FEFAM),

Table 3. Responses to Simpson's "Moral Majority Platform" Items, 1985

"Please tell me whether or not *you* think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a *legal* abortion if the woman wants it for any reason." (ABANY)

Yes	35.8%
No[a]	61.1
Don't know	3.1

"What about sexual relations between two *adults* of the same sex—do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?" (HOMOSEX)

Always wrong[a]	73.0%
Almost always wrong	3.9
Wrong only sometimes	6.8
Not wrong at all	13.3
Don't know	3.1

"It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." (FEFAM)

Strongly agree[a]	9.8%
Agree[a]	37.8
Disagree	37.6
Strongly disagree	13.2
Don't know	1.7

"The United States Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government may *require* the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. What are your views on this—do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling?" (PRAYER)

Approve	43.1%
Disapprove[a]	53.9
No opinion	3.1

[a] A response classified as supportive of the Moral Majority platform.

there were more substantial shifts away from the Moral Majority position. Overall, in 1985 323 of the 1,522 GSS respondents (21%) who answered all four of these questions fully shared the Moral Majority platform as defined by Simpson, down from 27% in 1977.

In sum, while Simpson's estimate continues to be cited as applicable today, there is reason to believe that it was out-of-date by the mid-1980s. A gap of only a few years may seem trivial, but when one is trying to estimate the current distribution of opinions in an era of rapidly changing social attitudes, it may not be trivial at all.

SINGLE INDICATORS OF COMPLEX CONCEPTS

The fact that we find very different patterns of change over time depending on the item analyzed brings us to our most important criticism of the 30% estimate: it is a function of the particular questions used. To demonstrate this in vivid terms, we will use different GSS items to reestimate the percentage of Americans who in 1977 approved of the entire Moral Majority platform, and see how our estimate stacks up against Simpson's. The purpose of this exercise is not to derive a better point estimate, but to demonstrate how fragile the whole enterprise is. As we are about to see, substituting one defensible set of indicators for another defensible set of indicators produces a dramatically different result.

The first step is to consider the phenomenon we are trying to measure. A "platform" is an agenda for action, a set of *policy statements.* Whether homosexuality is "always wrong" is not a policy issue, though it is full of policy implications, such as whether homosexual activity between consenting adults should be illegal. By the same token, whether women should tend to the family while men work outside the home is not a policy issue, but whether the Equal Rights Amendment should be adopted is. Since the purpose is to determine how many Americans share the Moral Majority's policy positions, not how many Americans share the Moral Majority's social and moral principles, we rely on items indicating respondents' public policy preferences.

But it is insufficient for a question simply to elicit opinions on a policy issue like abortion. A valid indicator of support for the Moral Majority platform must be framed so that it directly ties into the New Christian Right's position. We note in this respect that the Moral Majority in particular and fundamentalist Christians in general are opposed to abortion *under any circumstances.* In gauging support for the Moral Majority position on abortion, Simpson used the ABANY GSS item: "Please tell me whether or not *you* think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a *legal* abortion if the woman wants it for any reason." Thus worded, this question explicitly probes respondents' support for abortion *on demand* ("if the woman wants it for any reason"). Whether there are any circumstances under which abortion should be permitted is a very different question, and it is, in fact, a question (ABLEGAL) that was asked in the 1977 GSS: "Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or never legal under any circumstances?" The response indicative of agreement with the Moral Majority position is clearly "never legal under any circumstances."

Guided by these considerations, we followed Simpson's precedent in selecting four 1977 GSS items to measure public support for the Moral Majority platform. The first of these was the same one he employed on support for school prayer ("The United States Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government may *require* the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. What are your views on this—do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling?"). The second was the ABLEGAL item. The GSS contains no appropriate policy preference item concerning homosexuality, but it does contain a rather different policy item that taps into the New Religious Right's conservatism on sexual matters (SEXEDUC): "Would you be for or against sex education in the public schools?" This served as the third item in our reestimation. Finally, in the late 1970s the foremost political expression of traditionalism vis-à-vis woman's role was opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, for which the Moral Majority's contempt was readily apparent. That being the case, we adopted the GSS's ERA question ("Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose this amendment?") as our fourth item.

The response frequencies for these four items are shown in Table 4. What stands out is that on all three substitute items the percentage of the public espousing the Moral Majority position was substantially lower than it was on the three items Simpson used. Accordingly, in contrast to Simpson's estimate that 27% shared the Moral Majority view across the board, on our four items only *six* respondents—0.4% of the total—shared the Moral Majority view. On the possibility that our cutting points were unrealistically stringent, we subsequently relaxed the criteria for concurrence with the Moral Majority position to include those who would permit abortion under certain circumstances and those who "somewhat opposed" passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. Even with Moral Majority policy positions cast in these watered-down forms, only 72 of the 1,502 respondents for whom answers were recorded on the four items—5%—shared the Moral Majority viewpoint on all four issues.[3]

The minuscule estimates of public support for the Moral Majority

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[3] The percentage of respondents agreeing with the Moral Majority position on all four issues is a function of the marginal response distribution on each item *and* the interitem correlations. Our analysis (not shown here) indicates that Simpson's four items are slightly more highly intercorrelated than the four we have used for reestimation purposes, but differences in the marginal distributions are by far the more critical factor in determining why the overall point estimate varies so much from his four items to ours.

Table 4. Responses to Alternative "Moral Majority Platform" Items, 1977

"Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or never legal under any circumstances?" (ABLEGAL)	
Under any circumstances	21.8%
Under certain circumstances(a)	67.9
Never legal[a]	8.9
Don't know	0.1
"Would you be for or against sex education in the schools?" (SEXEDUC)	
For	77.0%
Against[a]	20.9
Don't know	2.1
"Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose [the Equal Rights Amendment]?" (ERA)	
Strongly favor	17.9%
Somewhat favor	40.0
Somewhat oppose(a)	13.3
Strongly oppose[a]	7.8
Don't know	20.0
"The United States Supreme Court has ruled that no state or local government may *require* the reading of the Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools. What are your views on this—do you approve or disapprove of the court ruling?" (PRAYER)	
Approve	33.5%
Disapprove[a]	64.2
No opinion	2.3

[a] A response classified as supportive of the Moral Majority platform.

platform that follow from our reestimation paint an entirely different picture from Simpson's original estimate. If forced to choose between the two estimates, we would defend ours as the more indicative of the Moral Majority's positions on key questions of public policy, but we surely do not intend for our figure to be taken seriously as an estimate of public support for the Moral Majority platform. The real purpose of this exercise has not been to introduce a new, improved estimate of public support for the Moral Majority platform, but rather to demonstrate in a very concrete way how perilous it is to try to estimate public support for the Moral Majority platform.

Conclusion

Although we have focused on Simpson's analysis, he is hardly alone in endeavoring to sum up opinion on a complex topic in a single number. As we noted at the outset, several analyses of the New Christian Right have engaged in the same enterprise, and support for the New Christian Right is only the latest of a host of topics that have been subjected to this treatment.

Despite numerous warnings about the fragility of survey marginals (see, e.g., Schuman, 1986), most of us are fascinated by the question of how many people favor a particular position and how many oppose it. This seems a fundamental question, and one that should be simple to answer. But the results presented here show anew that it is likely to be a question that admits no one correct answer.[4]

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[4] Our results are also of interest in another way. Several well-known studies have shown that people give very different answers to policy questions on an issue than they do to value questions on the same issue (see, e.g., Prothro and Grigg, 1960; Jackman, 1978). Yet it is easy to forget this distinction by interpreting answers to general value items as if they shed light on specific policy positions. Our results, in line with prior studies, show a pronounced difference between responses on value and policy items. However, the direction of this difference is at odds with past work. On civil liberties and racial tolerance, Americans express more liberal views to general value questions than to specific policy ones. By contrast, on the women's rights issues examined here, the reverse is true: more conservative answers were given to the general questions than to the ERA item.

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A REPLY TO "MEASURING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE NEW CHRISTIAN RIGHT: THE PERILS OF POINT ESTIMATION"

JOHN H. SIMPSON

Sigelman and Presser raise several interesting questions about the problems of measuring and estimating attitudinal support for the New Christian Right in the American population. Before discussing their points a preliminary observation is in order.

The naive reader of Sigelman and Presser—by that I mean the reader who has not read Simpson, 1983—will assume from the subtitle of the article ("The Perils of Point Estimation") and the text of the article that my goal was to produce a point estimate of support for the sociomoral issue platform of the Moral Majority ("In point estimation we are interested in the best single value [as opposed to the confidence interval] which can be used to estimate a parameter" [Blalock, 1960:154]). One can hardly quarrel with the argument that, except in unusual circumstances, point estimation is not acceptable in reporting survey data. However, as far as Simpson, 1983, is concerned, point estimation is not an issue because as a reading of the article makes clear the goal of the analysis was not to produce a point estimate but to test a multiple indicator measurement model using the maximum likelihood latent structure analysis technique (MLLSA) (Goodman, 1974; Clogg, 1977).

Among other things, the results of the analysis can be interpreted as a test of the hypothesis that a simple formal model of a political-issue arena fits the observed data. The assumptions of the model are: (1) a set of issues exists on which individual members of a population are either for or against each issue; (2) the population, as a whole, is divided into two camps on the issues (liberal and conservative). The model fits the data well according to a standard goodness-of-fit measure (chi-square divided by degrees of freedom).

There are a number of substantive conclusions not mentioned by

JOHN H. SIMPSON is Professor of Sociology and Chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto.

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Sigelman and Presser that follow from the good fit of the model to the observed data. The most important, perhaps, is that in 1977 the American public was divided into two camps—one liberal (the minority camp), the other conservative (the majority camp)—on certain issues that were subsequently politicized by the Moral Majority and other New Christian Right organizations. That conclusion is based on the classification of respondents by the MLLSA procedure and not on the observed joint frequency distribution of respondents' attitudes toward issues.

Sigelman and Presser's discussion is based on one cell of the observed joint frequency distribution reported by Simpson (1983:189) and on marginal frequencies from various GSS surveys. My discussion (1983) is based on latent class assignments and cell frequencies that were estimated by the MLLSA procedure. The frequencies estimated by the MLLSA procedure are not point estimates as are the frequencies in the observed joint frequency distribution. Rather they are estimates made under certain assumptions and are rejectable on statistical grounds.

Of course, a model is no better than the data on which it rests, and that is the point that Sigelman and Presser presumably would try to make if they had considered the point of my article. Let us then turn to those points of theirs that have a bearing on the observed data that were analyzed by the MLLSA procedure. These are: treatment of "don't knows" and cutting points.

Regarding "don't knows," it is true as Sigelman and Presser point out that they were not included in my 1983 analysis. The low percentages (2.9%, 4.5%, 1.5%, 2.3%) and the unequivocally clear interpretation of the remaining categories led to their exclusion. Would coding them in a "nonsupport/opposition" category, as Sigelman and Presser suggest, make a significant difference in the 16-fold table and, therefore, in the MLLSA analysis of that table? That would depend on strong systematic biases existing that would cause the small number of "don't knows" to cluster in a very small number of cells rather than being distributed randomly over the table. I can think of no reason why such biases should exist. In the meantime, however, I will accept the conservative interpretation that the results of my analysis apply to those who held opinions on the four issues while adding (as Sigelman and Presser recognize) that, proportionately, only a few Americans did not have opinions on the issues.

As far as cutting points go, Sigelman and Presser question my handling of the FEFAM item ("It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family"—Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree). I dichotomized between Agree and Disagree. They think that the Moral Majority's position is better represented by drawing a line between Strongly Agree and Agree. Is it?

I think that direction rather than intensity is more important on the item. There may be some who are attitudinally within the "Moral Majority circle" on such issues as homosexuality and abortion but may be cross-pressured on the traditional female role to the extent that it implies that the female spouse in a household should not be in the labor force, but there is an economic necessity for her labor force participation. In other words, the reality of economics may take the edge off a strong endorsement of the item, but one can still hold a Moral Majority view by agreeing with the item. Any disagreement with the item would, obviously, be outside the Moral Majority pale. Prima facie any degree of agreement with the item puts one in or perilously close to the Moral Majority's view.

Having missed the point of the 1983 article, Sigelman and Presser nevertheless did discuss two methodological points that bear on the observed frequencies reported in the article: the treatment of "don't knows" and the cutting point for one attitude item. In neither case does their argument lead me to conclude that the observed frequencies should be changed.

Sigelman and Presser raise other points that have no bearing on the observed frequencies that were analyzed in Simpson, 1983. Regarding point-in-time estimates, clearly, things have changed since 1977, but that is no reason to fault an estimate of where the public was then. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Simpson, 1985b), the 1977 data provide a baseline of opinion on certain issues that were subsequently politicized by the New Religious Political Right and, as such, give us some clues about the attitudinal "raw material" that was available to the political professionals who were interested in creating the New Religious Political Right. As the burden of the interpretive sections of Simpson, 1983, was to account for the rise of the Moral Majority, it seemed to make good sense to ascertain the attitudinal situation in the American population that existed as a resource for those who wished to construct a politics of sociomoral issues. Clearly, over-time investigation of attitudes is needed, but that point does not invalidate the estimate based on the 1977 data and its interpretive usefulness.

The final section of Sigelman and Presser's article—"Single Indicators of Complex Concepts"—is, in my view, the most interesting section but perhaps not for reasons that the authors themselves would agree with. However, before discussing the section it should be noted that the title of the section is misleading if it is taken as a reference to the analysis in Simpson, 1983. As pointed out above, the point of that analysis was to test a multiple indicator measurement model.

In the final section of the article, Sigelman and Presser demonstrate that by choosing items that tap attitudes toward policies, one can show that support for the Moral Majority is weak. I have no quarrel with that conclusion. The focus of my Moral Majority research, however, has not been on policy formation but on what might be called "image arenas" in electoral politics and their uses and effects (Simpson, 1983, 1985a, 1985b, 1987a, 1987b). The research falls within the broad scope of the research tradition that is concerned with "symbolic politics" (Edelman, 1964; Gusfield, 1963). That focus has implications for the choice of attitude items for analysis. In selecting attitude items I have always tried to avoid, where possible, items that tap attitudes toward policies or specific legislative/judicial acts in favor of items that appear to tap diffuse values or orientations that are manipulated by the political professionals and media experts in the image arenas. Thus, ABANY (abortion on demand) was chosen rather than ABLEGAL (legalization of abortion) and FEFAM (women should be in the home) rather than ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) from the 1977 GSS.

Given that my concern has been image politics, Sigelman and Presser would undoubtedly quarrel with the language that I used in the 1983 article. There I said that I was dealing with issues related to the "platform" of the Moral Majority. According to them a platform "is an agenda for action, a set of *policy statements*." While that may be the case, a platform in American politics can also be a set of promises and statements that have little if any bearing on the actual behaviors of elected officials or the formation of public policy but are designed to hook the "electoral fish" (voters) by stimulating moods and dispositions. "Once, when [H. L. Mencken] was closeted with a Presidential candidate in the latter's drawing room on a campaign train, the matter of such promises came up. The candidate conceded that the promises he was making at every whistle stop could never be carried out, except through a miracle" (Cairns, 1969:213).

Despite the civics textbooks, there are major differences between electoral politics and the politics of public policy formation. Sigelman and Presser do not seem to take those differences very seriously.

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THE POLLS—A Report
HUMAN RIGHTS

ANNE E. GEYER AND
ROBERT Y. SHAPIRO

The role of the United States in the protection and promotion of human rights in other countries has long been a subject of debate in this country. Since World War II, the American public has become increasingly aware of human rights violations throughout the world, particularly those violations that infringe upon the right to life, integrity of the person, and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, movement, and due process of law. The human rights stand of President Jimmy Carter and public opposition to U.S. support for repressive Third World governments added to public concern for human rights. When the issue has been raised, there has been little public opposition to defending, in principle, international human rights: Americans oppose the murder or arbitrary imprisonment of political dissenters in all countries, and torture is opposed without reservation.

Nevertheless, throughout U.S. history the defense of human rights in other countries has been a strikingly unimportant issue for the American public (cf. Bachrach and Baratz, 1963; Chomsky, 1978). The low salience of the issue may be attributed to the fact that, up until recently, there have been few incentives for U.S. political leaders to keep human rights on the political agenda, and foreign governments have no incentives for making information available about violations of rights in their own countries.

The severe problems entailed in compiling accurate data on human rights violations in countries whose governments are not eager to have such information made public make the incidence of human rights violations very difficult to study empirically. Freedom House and the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (Taylor and Jodice,

ANNE E. GEYER is a graduate student in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. ROBERT Y. SHAPIRO is Associate Professor of Political Science and a researcher at Columbia's Center for the Social Sciences. The authors thank Tom W. Smith, Nora Dell (Chicago Council on Foreign Relations), Paula Newberg, Benjamin Page, Steven Farkas, John Young, and Louise Wickham and Samuel Suratt (CBS News) for useful discussions and assistance in assembling the data.

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1983), for example, have compiled quantitative data on worldwide human rights conditions, but these data have been criticized for not accurately reflecting the level and gravity of human rights violations (cf. Goldstein, 1986; Stohl et al., 1986). The news media in the United States have been constrained in their reporting of human rights issues because they lack access to information about human rights conditions abroad. They are also affected by the inattention to the issue by American leaders whose statements and actions they follow and report (e.g., Gans, 1979).

When President Carter took office, government rhetoric focused upon international human rights issues much more so than in the past. The Reagan administration, however, openly reversed the White House position of the Carter years. As a result we might have expected some visible changes in public opinion and government policies. The best evidence shows that despite any exaltation and good intentions during the Carter years, no appreciable changes on either front occurred. The same held under Reagan. Although it is disputed whether any inferences can be made from the limited data on human rights violations, U.S. diplomatic relations and foreign aid to different countries have never been related appreciably to the human rights policies of their governments (cf. Carleton and Stohl, 1987; Schoultz, 1981). All that changed under the Carter administration was the *rhetoric* (e.g., Carleton and Stohl, 1985).

Human rights did receive a dramatic boost in media attention during Carter's early years in office (some rough evidence for this is presented below, although there are clearly difficulties in tracing this because of changes in the ways human rights reports have been indexed), and while this coverage did decline after peaking in 1977, it did not return to its earlier low levels after Carter left the White House. When Reagan took office, however, the content of the debate about human rights shifted more toward oppression in the Soviet Union and the meaning and consequences of international terrorism.

There has been little indication of change in public opinion toward human rights as a foreign policy goal during the Carter and Reagan years. (One exception is public opinion toward South Africa and apartheid, which warrants attention as a separate subject, and these data are not included below.) While most Americans say they are in favor of protecting human rights abroad, support for human rights diminishes to varying degrees when it is suggested that such protection might interfere with the attainment of other foreign policy goals such as the containment of communism or the maintenance of friendly relations with countries perceived to be economically or strategically important to the United States. With respect to the measures that should be employed toward the protection of human rights abroad, the survey data suggest that the public prefers to maintain relations with most countries and to have the United States use "quiet diplomacy" to pressure foreign governments to improve human rights conditions—with uncertain results.

Strikingly few questions about human rights have been repeated verbatim in national surveys, making it extremely difficult to track opinion trends. We would suggest that many of the existing survey items be replicated, rather than new questions created each time human rights becomes a front-page issue. The fragmentary nature of the survey data, of course, is a finding in itself, consistent with the above claims about the salience of the human rights issue. This, along with the unusually high percentage of "don't know" responses, indicates that human rights is not a salient issue for the American public.

The survey questions reported here were taken from the files of the Policy Change and Public Opinion Change Project, originally at NORC, University of Chicago. These data were compiled from published and unpublished sources, and with the assistance of the Roper Center (including the POLL database), University of Connecticut; the Louis Harris Data Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan; and the NORC Library. Further information about these data can be obtained from the appropriate archive or survey organization.

ABC/WP—American Broadcasting Company/*Washington Post*
Gallup—Gallup Polls, American Institute for Public Opinion
Harris—Louis Harris and Associates
LAT—*Los Angeles Times*
NBC/AP—National Broadcasting Company/Associated Press
NYT/CBS—*New York Times*/Columbia Broadcasting System
NORC—NORC, University of Chicago
ORC—Opinion Research Corporation
Roper—Roper Organization
Yankelovich—Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc., including surveys conducted for *Time*

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Media Coverage

NUMBER OF STORIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS

New York Times

	Freedom & Human Rights	*Torture*	*Political Prisoners*	*Amnesty International*	*Total*
1976[a]	120	78	—	23	221
1977	466	53	1	44	563
1978	474	14	—	15	503
1979	460	31	1	18	509
1980	340	39	—	7	386
1981	376	33	223[b]	9	641
1982	317	26	126	7	476
1983	319	23	120	2	464
1984	346	34	208	7	595
1985	309	24	142	2	477
1986	309	36	154	10	509

SOURCE: *New York Times Index*, 1975 to 1986.

NOTE: Stories indexed under "Human Rights" were tallied first. Some of these stories were indexed again under one of the other three categories. Such stories were *not* counted twice.

[a] Prior to 1976, the *New York Times* did not include foreign countries in its "Freedom & Human Rights" category.

[b] This apparently represents a shift in classification. In 1982, the largest number of entries under the "Political Prisoners" category were stories about Northern Ireland. In 1982 and 1983 the majority of stories listed dealt with Poland. From 1984 to 1986, Poland, South Africa, Cuba, South Korea, and the Soviet Union predominate in this category.

Washington Post

	Human Rights	*Torture*	*Political Dissent*	*Amnesty International*	*Total*
1975	13	9	61	—	83
1976	66	18	74	2	160
1977	379	10	147	4	540
1978	132	6	177	3	318
1979	77	6	106	5	194
1980	68	3	124	2	197
1981	125	3	64	6	198
1982[a]	208	—	51	—	259
1983	224	4	23	1	252
1984	94	4	54	2	154
1985	71	—	56	1	128
1986	62	11	79	6	158

SOURCE: *Washington Post Index*, 1975 to 1986.

[a] Beginning in 1982 the category "Human Rights" is replaced by "Civil Rights" (with subheadings by country) and the category "Political Dissent" is replaced by "Political Prisoners."

Los Angeles Times

	Human Rights	*Torture*	*Political Dissent*	*Amnesty International*	*Total*
1975	5	2	34	—	41
1976	16	5	12	1	34
1977	230	1	33	11	275
1978	64	3	115	2	184
1979	78	—	60	5	143
1980	62	2	89	—	153
1981	88	—	66	2	156
1982	99	1	44	—	144
1983	96	—	51	1	148
1984[a]	108	11	85	5	209
1985	90	16	64	2	172
1986	86	12	75	13	186

SOURCE: *Los Angeles Times Index*, 1975 to 1986.

[a] Beginning in 1984 the category "Human Rights" is replaced by "Freedom & Human Rights" and the category "Political Dissent" is replaced by "Political Prisoners."

Newsweek and *Time*

	Civil Rights (Intl. Aspects)	*Torture*	*Political Prisoners*	*Amnesty International*	*Total*
1975	—, 1	1,—	6, 6	—	7, 8
1976	—, 2	1, 1	2, 6	—	3, 9
1977	19,13	—	9, 7	1, 1	29,21
1978	1, 3	—	7, 6	—	8, 9
1979	5, 6	1,—	9, 7	—	15,13
1980	4, 4	—	3, 3	—	7, 7
1981	7, 2	—, 1	19,20	—	26,23
1982	6,10	2,—	7, 8	—	15,18

	Civil Rights (Intl. Aspects)	*Torture*	*Political Prisoners*	*Amnesty International*	*Total*
1983	3, 5	—	16, 6	1,—	20,11
1984	2, 1	1, 1	15, 9	—	18,11
1985	9, 7	—, 1	7, 4	—	16,12
1986	2, 1	—	16,11	—, 1	18,13

SOURCE: *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, 1975 to 1986.
NOTE: The first figure listed in each column represents stories in *Newsweek*, the second represents stories in *Time*.

NUMBER OF NEWS ITEMS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

CBS Evening News

	Human Rights	*Torture*	*Political Prisoners*	*Total*
1975	6	1	—	7
1976	6	1	7	14
1977	93	—	3	96
1978	29	—	11	40
1979	6	2	2	10
1980	17	2	8	27
1981	25	—	8	33
1982	16	—	2	18
1983	26	2	4	32
1984	16	3	5	24
1985	38	7	1	46
1986	36	4	38	78

SOURCE: Data obtained from CBS News. Data from other networks were not available. The Vanderbilt Television News Archive's *News Index and Abstracts* does not use these types of keywords for tracking human rights issues. Stories are indexed simply by country.

Salience of Human Rights as a Foreign Policy Issue

Gallup: What do you feel are the two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States today that you would like to see the federal government do something about?

	11/78	*10–11/82*[a]	*1986*[a]
Mid-East	20%	19%	7%
Dealings with Russia	13	15	22
Terrorism	—	—	20
Reduce foreign aid	18	16	9
Balance of trade	12	13	15
Stay out of other countries' affairs	11	8	5
Nuclear arms race	7	13	16
Keeping peace/Better foreign relations	9	8	7
Latin/So. America	2	5	10

	11/78	*10–11/82*[a]	*1986*[a]
Other[b]	52	60	57
Human rights campaign	1	[c]	1
Don't know	21	16	16
	N = 1,546	*N* = 1,547	*N* = 1,585

[a] The 1982 and 1986 question eliminates the phrase "that you would like to see the federal government do something about."

[b] Total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses.

[c] Less than .5%.

Roper, ORC: (Of course, everyone is more interested in some things being carried in the news than in others.) Is news about . . . President Carter's criticisms of countries that violate human rights of their citizens . . . something you have recently been following fairly closely, just following casually, or not paying much attention to?

	Roper *3/77*	*ORC* *5/77*[a]
Following closely/Great deal	46%	27%
Following casually/Fair amount	37	40
Very little about		25
No attention/Nothing at all/Don't know	16	7
No opinion		1
	N = 2,001	*N* = 1,011

[a] How much have you heard or read about human rights as a foreign affairs issue—a great deal, a fair amount, very little, or nothing at all?

Defending Human Rights in General

Harris, Gallup: I'd like to read you some statements people have made about international affairs today. For each, tell me whether you tend to agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly. The U.S. should put pressure on countries which systematically violate basic human rights.

	Harris *12/74*	*Gallup* *11/78*[a]
Agree strongly	36%	31%
Agree somewhat	32	36
Disagree somewhat	15	17
Disagree strongly	7	8
Not sure, don't know	11	8
	N = 1,513	*N* = 1,546

[a] (I am going to read some statements about international affairs and U.S. foreign policy. For each, tell me if you tend to agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the statement.) . . .

Roper: (I'm going to read you some things President Carter has done or been identified with. Regardless of your overall opinions about Carter, for each one would you tell me if you approve of President Carter's position, don't approve of it, or have no opinion?) . . . His public criticism of nations that deny human rights to their citizens.

	9–10/77	*3/78*	*3/79*
Approve	59%	55%	53%
Disapprove	19	20	24
Mixed feelings/No opinion/ Don't know	21	25	23
	N = 2,004	N = 2,003	N = 2,004

ORC: (Now, let's turn to foreign affairs. I'm going to read some statements concerning various areas the federal government may be dealing with during the 1980's. As I read each statement, please tell me if you think the federal government should do more, should do less, or should continue to do about the same.) . . . Working to protect human rights in other countries.

	11/80	*12/82*
Do more	39%	39%
Do about the same	35	37
Do less	22	—
Do less/No opinion	—	24
No opinion	4	—
	N = 1,013	N = 1,005

Gallup: (I am going to read a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one please say whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all.) . . . Promoting and defending human rights in other countries.

	11/78	*10–11/82*	*1986*
Very important	39%	43%	42%
Somewhat important	40	42	45
Not important	14	9	9
Not sure/Don't know	7	6	4
	N = 1,546	N = 1,547	N = 1,585

ORC: Again thinking of human rights in terms of freedom of expression, freedom of movement, and political prisoners, do you think there are any conditions under which a government is justified in suspending the human rights of its citizens, or are there no conditions under which human rights should be suspended? (If "yes," ask:) Under which one or more of these conditions, if any, is a country justified in suspending the human rights of its citizens?

	5/77
Yes, when there is political and ideological dissent	4%
Yes, when there is terrorist activity	13
Yes, when there has been a complete breakdown of law and order	23
Yes, no opinion about which conditions	4
No, there are no conditions	54
No opinion	14
	N = 1,011

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Diplomacy: Friends, Foes, and U.S. Aid

ORC: Suppose a country supplied the United States with a critical raw material or was geographically important to our national defense, but treated its citizens in a way that the United States does not approve of. In this case, should we or should we not include the human rights issue in our foreign policy toward this country?

	5/77	*5/77*[a]
Yes, should include human rights issue	64%	66%
No, should not include human rights issue	25	25
No opinion	11	9
	N = ca. 506	*N* = ca. 506

NOTE: Split ballot; total *N* = 1,011.

[a] Suppose a country DOES NOT supply the United States with any critical raw material. . . . should we or should we not include the human rights issue in our foreign policy toward this country?

LAT, NYT/CBS: What do you think the United States ought to do about countries that violate basic human rights but are friendly toward us and opposed to the communists? Do you think we should put pressure on those countries to improve human rights and risk losing their friendship . . . or do you think we should seek the support of those countries in spite of the way they treat their own people?

	LAT 4/81	*LAT 1/82*[a]	*LAT 7/82*[b]	*NYT/ CBS 4/86*[c]
Pressure (strongly)/Risk/ Criticize	44%	28%	47%	54%
Pressure (not so strongly)		13		
Support/Ignore viol./ Don't criticize	35	28	32	31
Support (not so strongly)		17		
Both/Neither/Depends	7	4	7	3
Not sure/No opinion	13	9	12	12
Refused	1	1	2	
	N = 1,406	*N* = 1,509	*N* = 1,102	*N* = 1,601

[a] What do you think the United States. . . . do you think we should seek the support of those countries and not make an issue about their internal affairs? (Wait for reply) Do you feel strongly about that, or not so strongly?

[b] What do you think the United States. . . . do you think we should seek the support of those countries to fight communism in spite of the human rights which are denied to their own people?

[c] Should the United States criticize governments that deny human rights to their citizens, even if those governments support us on important foreign policy issues?

ORC: I am going to name several countries. In each case, suppose the country treated its citizens in a way that the United States does not approve of, such as the existence of major problems with freedom of expression, freedom of movement, and political prisoners. If . . . (country) . . . treated its citizens in a way that we did not approve of, what action should the United States take? Should the United States . . . have no relations until its citizens are treated better; maintain relations, but be critical in public; maintain relations, and quietly try to improve the situation; ignore the situation?

	5/77							
	Uruguay	*Uganda*	*USSR*	*So. Africa*	*Nicaragua*	*France*	*Chile*	*Brazil*
Have no relations	6%	9%	8%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Maintain relations, criticize publicly	18	22	25	22	19	21	20	20
Maintain relations, quietly improve	50	44	46	51	50	53	56	53
Ignore situation	11	12	13	10	11	10	12	10
No opinion	15	13	8	10	14	10	6	11
	N = 1,011							

Gallup, ABC/WP: Which do you think is the greater cause of unrest in Central America today: subversion from Cuba, Nicaragua and the Soviet Union, or poverty and lack of human rights in the area?

	Gallup 4/83[a]	*ABC/WP 5/83*	*ABC/WP 8/83*	*ABC/WP 5/84*	*Gallup 4–5/87*
Subversion	29%	22%	25%	30%	19%
Poverty/Lack of rights	50	57	59	51	51
Both equally	16	8	7	9	18
Don't know	5	13	9	10	12
	N = 859	*N* = 1,501	*N* = 1,505	*N* = 1,511	*N* = 4,244

[a] Asked of those who knew which side the United States was backing in El Salvador—47%.

North and South Korea

Gallup: Now I am going to ask you specifically your impression of the situation in South Korea and North Korea today as it concerns the human rights issue, that is, the degree to which the rights and liberties of their individual citizens are protected. What is your impression of the situation in *North Korea* concerning human rights—very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

	4/78	*9/79*[a]
Very favorable	1%	4%
Somewhat favorable	8	14
Somewhat unfavorable	22	24
Very unfavorable	32	29
Don't know	37	29
	N = 773	*N* = 1,065

[a] And what is your impression of the situation in North Korea concerning human rights—very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Gallup: Now I am going to ask you specifically your impression of the situation in South Korea and North Korea today as it concerns the human rights issue, that is, the degree to which the rights and liberties of their individual citizens are protected. What is your impression about the situation in South Korea concerning human rights—very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

	4/78	9/79[a]
Very favorable	4%	7%
Somewhat favorable	27	25
Somewhat unfavorable	22	24
Very unfavorable	12	15
Don't know	35	29
	N = 773	N = 1,065

[a] Now I am going to . . . are protected. First, . . .

Yankelovich, Gallup: President Carter says that he is trying to bring more morality to our country's foreign policy. Some people feel he is doing the right things, others that he is making unwise decisions. Do you personally feel that President Carter should or should not: Continue to give aid to countries like South Korea because they are essential to our defense—even if they suppress human rights in that country?

	Yankelovich	Gallup	Yankelovich
	3/77	9/79[a]	5/81[b]
Should give aid	29%	26%	23%
Should not give aid/ make conditional	50	49	67
Not sure/Don't know	21	25	10
	N = 1,004	N = 1,065	N = 1,221

[a] Would you favor or oppose making the U.S. security commitment to South Korea conditional upon an improvement in the human rights situation?

[b] Now, I'd like to know how you feel about a number of important issues that face the country. Do you favor or oppose: Giving economic and military support to anti-communist allies such as South Korea even if they violate human rights?

Soviet Union

Yankelovich: President Carter says that he is trying to bring more morality to our country's foreign policy. Some people feel he is doing the right things, others that he is making unwise decisions. Do you personally feel that President Carter should or should not: Continue to complain to the Russians about the suppression of human rights even if it slows down détente and the chances for an arms agreement.

	3/77
Should	55%
Should not	26
Not sure	19
	N = 1,004

NBC/AP: Do you think that the United States should break off negotiations with Russia aimed at limiting nuclear weapons because of Russian violations of human rights, or do you think negotiations should continue?

	8/78
Break off negotiations	15%
Continue negotiations	76
Not sure	9
	N = 1,600

Harris, Yankelovich, Roper: Do you feel that President Carter's staunch and continued emphasis on the human rights of Russian dissidents will improve his ability to come to agreement with the Russians, will hurt his ability to negotiate with them, or won't make much difference?

	Harris *3/77*	*Yankelovich* *3/77*[a]	*Roper* *4–5/77*[b]
Improve ability/Increase chances	20%	16%	9%
Hurt ability/Decrease chances	23	27	31
No difference/Won't affect	38	58	46
Not sure/Don't know	19		15
	N = 1,549	*N* = 1,004	*N* = 2,002

[a] Do you personally feel that by taking a hard line with the Russians on the suppression of human rights in that country that we are helping or hurting our relations with the U.S.S.R. (Soviet Union)—or don't you think it will make that much difference?

[b] We are currently engaged in talks to reach an arms agreement with Russia, and Russia is one of the countries President Carter has criticized for denying its citizens human rights. Do you think Carter's criticisms will decrease the chances of reaching an arms agreement with Russia, or increase the chances of reaching an agreement, or won't affect the outcome of the talks one way or the other?

Harris: (Now let me read you some reasons which some people have given for the U.S. and Russia having failed to come to an agreement in their Strategic Arms Limitation Talks [SALT]. For each reason, tell me if you tend to agree or disagree.) . . . President Carter hurt his chances of getting an agreement on SALT because he kept talking about how the Russians were violating human rights.

	3/77	*7/78*[a]
Agree/Has hurt chances	46%	62%
Disagree/Has not hurt chances	25	26
Not sure	29	12
	N = 1,540	*N* = 1,238

[a] Do you feel that President Carter's continuing emphasis on the Russian violations of human rights of dissidents in that country has . . . Made it more difficult to reach an agreement with the Russians on SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) arms control and other important issues?

Harris, Yankelovich: (Let me read you some recent foreign policy stands President Carter has taken. For each, tell me if you favor or oppose that stand.) . . . His insistence on criticizing Russia for violating human rights of dissidents in that country?

	Harris *5–6/77*	*Yankelovich* *3/83*[a]
Favor/Great deal of emphasis	55%	24%
Some emphasis		30
Oppose/Not much emphasis	21	18
Not familiar		25
Not sure	24	3
	N = 1,625	*N* = 1,008

[a] (There are a number of issues and areas of dispute between the United States and the Soviet Union these days. Some are more important than others. In dealing with the Soviet Union, how much emphasis do you think our government should place on each of the following—a great deal of emphasis, some emphasis, or not that much emphasis—or don't you feel familiar enough to say?) . . . Stepped-up crackdown on human rights and dissenters in the Soviet Union.

NYT/CBS, LAT, Gallup: President Reagan says he wants to talk about human rights violations in the Soviet Union at the summit meeting (with Gorbachev). Do you think this is the right time to raise that issue, or not?

	NYT/CBS *11/85*	*LAT* *11/85*[a]	*Gallup* *11/85*[b]
Right time/#1 Topic/Very important	43%	48%	46%
Useful to bring up	—	27	—
Not right time/Don't bring up	47	18	—
Don't know/Not sure	10	7	—
	N = 1,659	N = 2,041	N = 588

[a] National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane says that human rights will be a number-one topic at the (November 1985 Reagan–Gorbachev) summit. Do you think Soviet violations of human rights should be at the top of the agenda, or not? (If not) Do you think it would be useful to bring up the subject at this time?

[b] How important is it that the following issue be discussed at the Geneva summit (between Reagan and Gorbachev)? . . . Human rights in the U.S.S.R. (Soviet Union/ Russia). [Partial response only.]